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The Relationship Between Belief In A Just World And Spiritual Faith — in the context of cross-cultural

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Abstract.

So far, the researches about belief in a just world (BJW) have obtained many achievements in the fields of the behavior of punishing the victim, and the functions of building psychological well-being. There are researches indicated that there are links between religion and BJW, especially with Ultimate Justice (Begue, 2002). But to the people who don't have a religion, which support his or her sense of BJW? So we use the participants from China, which don't have religion, and the participants from Indonesia, which are all religion believer to find the answer. The result shows that, both participants from the two countries have the same level of general BJW and social belief, while the Immanent and Ultimate BJW, supernatural and pragmatic belief, the Indonesian participants score higher than Chinese participants. To the relationship between BJW and spiritual faith, Chinese participants' BUJ and general BJW are connected with social belief, while the Indonesian part shows the general BJW and Ultimate BJW are corresponded with all belief, and the Immanent BJW is related with Pragmatic Belief and Social Belief. The scales we apply are the Just Word scale (Rubin & Peplau, 1973) and Belief in Immanent/Ultimate Justice Scale (Maes, 1999), both have good validity and reliability; and the scale of spiritual belief (Song Xingchuan, 2004) to find out the difference between Indonesian and Chinese students, and we also use the classical "trolley problem", which is added the variable of obey or violate the norm, to estimate the extend of one concern about the social norm.

Keywords: belief in a just world, spiritual faith, cross culture

Introduction

Spiritual Faith

Faith is conceptualized as trust in a person, a thing or other divine power, such as religion or political power. Practically, people always view faith as supernatural belief. However, in this diverse society, people, especially college students and emerging adults, score differently in various dimensions of faith. Song (2004) investigates that faith of college students can be categorized as supernatural belief, pragmatic belief and social belief. In China, college students score most highly on social belief, which is about political belief and nationalism; the next is the pragmatic belief, which is about Materialism, familistic and life worship; and least on supernatural belief, which is about religious belief and divine worship. The reason for the the high degree of believe in the society, or the country is due to the Chinese tradition of "be royalty and dedicate oneself to the service of one's leader and country", and with the education of atheism, and the belief in the Communist Party, the Chinese people indeed have little sense of religion.

Contrary to current situation in China, most of the Indonesians believe in religion. And most religions existing around the world have a god, or some divine power leading the believer. Rewarding to the content of supernatural belief, we assume that there are difference between Indonesian college students' and Chinese college students' score in different dimensions of spiritual faith, especially in supernatural belief.

Hypothesis A: Indonesian college students have higher score in supernatural belief than Chinese students.

Belief in a Just World

The concept of *The Belief in a Just World* (BJW) was first introduced by Lerner (1965), describing the belief that good things always happen to good people and vice versa. Based on the BJW hypothesis, Lerner proposed the Theory of a Just World Motivation, supposing that people tend to get what they deserve and blame victims (Ryan, 1971). Evidence shows that BJW is related to social perception, under which condition this type of belief would strongly influence people's loyalty towards social norm (Murray, Spadafore & McIntosh, 2005). Rubin and Peplau (1973, 1975) designed a scale, in order to measure BJW in different individual. Results received from these questionnaire demonstrate generality of BJW in cross-cultural background (Furnham, 2003).

BJW has been proved to be related to self-esteem, fear of death, blaming victim effects, and even religiosity and immortality (Lerner, 1997; Begue, 2002; Bennett, 2008). However, there are many self-contradictory results, even failing to show derogation effect co-varies with BJW (Maes & Schmitt, 1999). Maes (1992, 1998a) finally defined these two variants of BJW: (1) belief in immanent justice, which describe the phenomenon that people viewed events as the direct and just payment for previous actions; (2) belief in ultimate justice, in which people believe that any injustice would be judged by higher justice—perhaps a religious or divine power. (Maes, 1999).

Immanent justice and ultimate justice differ from each other at great extent, according to fact that devaluation of victims are highly related to immanent justice while ultimate justice results in more positive attitudes towards



victims (Maes, 1992,1999).

Furthermore, BJW has been proved to be closely related to religiosity (Begue, 2002), and both BJW and religiosity are positively corresponding to interpersonal trust. Faith of people are initiated by belief in one's perception of world. With regard to religious people, they hold perceived physical world differently from non-believers. Additionally, the extent to which they are involved in religion and their religious certainty have positive influence on their perception of well-being (Ellison, 1991). Among religious people, because of belief in divine power and god, which leading to the belief that god will maintain a just world and make fair judgment sooner or later, they will get higher score in belief in BJW, especially in ultimate justice, thus they would view victims more positively (Maes, & Schmitt, 1999). In contrast, people who score high in immanent justice are prone to be strict with victims and choose more severe judgments. Consequently, we hypothesize that religious people would not desire immediate repay for current issue, otherwise they would prefer what they deserve in future.

Hypothesis B: People who score high in supernatural belief also get high score in belief in ultimate justice.

Method

Participants

137 Chinese college students and 46 Indonesian college students.

Measures

There two scales to assess the BJW. One measures the general BJW, a sixteen-item scale of Rubin and Peplau (1975). The reliability of this scale (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.80. The other one measures Immanent Justice and Ultimate Justice, a five-item and four-item scales of Maes

(1998). The reliability of the scales (Cronbach's alpha) were respectively 0.83 and 0.86.

Spiritual Faith Preferences were assessed with a thirty-nine-item scale of Song (2003). The reliability of this scale (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.73.

Result

Chinese and Indonesian' difference in BJW and spiritual beliefs

Table 1 presents the average mean of scale score of the three measures, separately among each culture. Indonesian participants generally score higher than Chinese participants on all dimensions of the scales. difference in BJW

For the BJW part, independent sample t-test shows that the difference was significant in both immanent and ultimate BJW, and the general BJW, $t(181)=-3.070, p<0.05, t(181)=-7.087, p<0.001, t(181)=-2.732, p<0.01$. The score Indonesian students got is higher than the Chinese student.

difference in Spiritual Beliefs

For the part of spiritual belief, Indonesian participants, as Hypothesis A predicted, score much higher than Chinese participants on dimension of supernatural belief, since all our Indonesian participants believe in religion (N=46, 100%) but most of our Chinese participants do not (N=9, 6.5%). Independent sample t-test was significant, $t(181)=-13.812, p<0.001$. Moreover, Indonesian participants also score significantly higher on pragmatic belief but not on social belief. In addition, most Indonesian score the highest on supernatural belief while most Chinese score the highest on social belief, which is consistent with Song's finding (Song, & Jin, 2004).

Relationships between BJW and Spiritual Beliefs

Table 1 Indonesian and Chinese average score on immanent ultimate justice belief, general BJW and beliefs (Mean±S.D.)

	China	Indonesia
Immanent BJW**	2.69±0.74	3.08±0.75
Ultimate BJW**	3.78±0.79	4.71±0.70
General BLW	3.45±0.50	3.63±0.34
Supernatural Belief**	3.10±0.69	4.67±0.60
Pragmatic Belief**	3.59±0.66	4.09±0.65
Social Belief	3.86±0.76	3.85±0.55

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 the correlations of BJW score and Spiritual Beliefs scores(Chinese part N=137)

	Supernatural Belief	Pragmatic Belief	Social Belief
BIJ	.129	.013	-.076
BUJ	.134	.143	.276**
General BJW	-.030	.076	.173*

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Among the Chinese part, the highest belief of social belief has positive relation with BUJ and general BJW.

Table 3 the correlations of BJW score and Spiritual Beliefs scores (Indonesian part N=46)

	Supernatural Belief	Pragmatic Belief	Social Belief
BIJ	-.021	.378*	.450**
BUJ	.536**	.163**	.087**
General BJW	.299*	.309*	.523**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Among the Indonesia part, despite the small sum of participant, shows lots of relation between different beliefs and BJW.

Discussion

Summary and Implications

The present study investigates the relation between spiritual belief and belief in a just world, in the Chinese and Indonesian context. Because all Indonesian participants believe in a religion, most of them (N=35, 76.09%) score highest on supernatural belief as we previously predicted, while more than half of Chinese participants score highest on social belief (N=81, 59.12%), and interesting thing is, the level of social belief of both country is the same. In other words, the religious belief of Indonesia students is quite important in their lives. These two populations show a significant difference on their spiritual belief type.

Furthermore, previous finding suggested that religious belief and belief in a just world are tightly connected (Rubin and Peplau, 1975; Zweigenhaft et al., 1985; Matthew, 2000), we also assume that this fundamental difference leads to differential dimensions of BJW. As expected, our results found some evidence to support this idea since Indonesian participants have a much higher ultimate justice score than Chinese participants, which is consistent with previous findings (Maes, & Schmitt, 1999). The result of relation between three kinds of faith in Indonesia shows that it is significant between pragmatic belief and social belief, and the supernatural belief is not connected with BIJ, which need further research to find the answer.

To the Chinese participants, their sense of BJW is only connected with social belief, but to them, the three

kinds of faith is inner connected also. So the spiritual faith of Chinese people is as a whole in this research, and the sense of justice is coming mostly from the belief in social.

4.2 Limitation and future directions

One of the most serious problems is the limited sample. Although we collect sample both in China and Indonesia, the number is comparably small, especially in Indonesia due to limited time and resource. Further research will be carried on with a larger sample size and more powerful validity. Because of this small sample size, advanced statistics analysis cannot be applied, resulting in a restricted further investigation. Thus, a belief-BJW-social norm model should come up with and tested, with their relationships as well as influential factors. Also, how spiritual belief influence belief in a just world and obedience to social norm as well as whether BJW function as a mediator should be carefully examined.

Since the present study employs self-report questionnaires and scales as main method, relative problem and limitation such as careless responding (Curran, Kotrba, & Denison, 2010), social desirability bias (Paulhus, 1991), etc., should be taken into consideration. In addition, experimental studies should be conducted to test the causal relationships among these variables with delicately designed manipulations. What's more, as both religious belief and belief in a just world was found to function against negative events and benefit mental health (Ellison, 1991; Ellison & Levin, 1998; George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002; Pichon & Saroglou, 2009), their function and influences on other personal or social behaviors may be discussed.



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