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THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION ON MALADAPTIVE PERFECTIONISM AMONG PERFECTIONIST **COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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PENGARUH **ORIENTASI** RELIGIOSITAS PERFEKSIONISME MALADAPTIF PADA MAHASISWA

TERHADAP

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Beberapa penelitian menemukan bahwa agama berkaitan dengan perfeksionisme yang dapat membahayakan kesehatan mental. Padahal, banyak penelitian lain menunjukkan bahwa agama membawa dampak positif terhadap kesehatan mental. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini dilakukan untuk memahami lebih jauh mengenai fenomena ini. Secara khusus, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat pengaruh dari orientasi religiositas terhadap perfeksionisme maladatif terhadap 82 mahasiswa dengan tingkat perfeksionisme tinggi berdasarkan alat ukur yang ada. Analisa data dilakukan dengan menggunakan korelasi Pearson Product-Moment dan regresi berganda. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa orientasi religius intrinsik berpengaruh negatif terhadap perfeksionisme maladaptif, sedangkan orientasi religius ekstrinsik berpengaruh positif terhadap perfeksionisme maladaptif. Penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya mengembangkan orientasi religius intrinsik, sehingga mahasiswa dapat memiliki perfeksionisme yang adaptif.

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Kata Kunci: mahasiswa non-eksperimental orientasi religius ekstrinsik orientasi religius intrinsik perfeksionisme maladaptif

Abstract

Several studies have found that religion linked to perfectionism can harm mental health. Conversely, most research found that religion resulted in positive effects on mental health. Therefore, the current study was conducted to better understand this phenomenon by examining religious orientation's influence on maladaptive perfectionism among 82 college students with high levels of perfectionism as indicated by the designated instrument. The data was subject to parametric statistical analysis using Pearson Product-Moment correlation and multiple linear regression. The results showed that intrinsic religious orientation negatively influences maladaptive perfectionism, while extrinsic religious orientation positively influences maladaptive perfectionism. The study highlights the importance for college students to develop an intrinsic religious orientation to achieve an adaptive perfectionism.

Keywords: college students, extrinsic religious orientation, intrinsic religious orientation, maladaptive perfectionism, non-experimental

Impact and Implication in the Indigenous Context

Religion is an imperative attribute in shaping social identity for most Indonesians. In fact, religious is a complex variable and culture plays an important part in determining its impact to one's mental health, particularly to one's level of perfectionism. Many Western studies found that religiosity tends to increase one's levels of perfectionism. The present study attempts to provide a comparative understanding between Western and Indonesian perspectives by exploring more closely the relationship between religiosity and perfectionism of Indonesian college students, with Indonesia being viewed as a collectivist and highly religious society. The result suggests the universality of intrinsic religiosity. It highlights the pivotal role of intrinsic religious orientation to achieve an adaptive perfectionism.

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INTRODUCTION

Perfectionism is common in today's society (Curran & Hill, 2019). Slaney and Ashby (1996) define perfectionism as having a high standard of behavior for one's performance. Curran and Hill (2019) found an increase of perfectionism across all aspects compared to youth in 1989 and 2017. This result revealed that perfectionism has expanded since 1990 after the government in the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom promoted the value of individual competitiveness in the 1980s, which created a competitive and materialistic environment. The situation in Indonesia is not much different. As Indonesia is becoming more connected to the world, the ASEAN Economic Community was established to enable the free flow of educated labor, and youths in Indonesia have to compete with other educated laborers from other ASEAN countries. It will create a competitive environment. While this competitive environment could make today's young generation try to be the best in all life fields, it could have several adverse effects (Maharrani, 2018). Moreover, previous studies found Asian students prone to have a higher perfectionism (Chang et al., 2012; Essau et al., 2008). Therefore, Indonesian students may have the same tendency.

Curran and Hill (2019) argued that perfectionism is at the root of why young people worldwide experienced depression or anxiety disorders. Young people nowadays tend to have excessively high standards and punish themselves if they do not meet them. Other studies have supported the proposition that perfectionism could have adverse effects, such as stress (Wirtz et al., 2007), low self-esteem (Ashby & Rice, 2002), high levels of shame (Ashby et al., 2006), and anxiety (Mobley et al., 2005).

However, some scholars believe that perfectionism is not always a negative attribute. Slaney et al. (2001) distinguish two types of perfectionism: adaptive and maladaptive. Individuals with a high level of maladaptive perfectionism tend to set excessively high standards and are motivated by their fear of failure (Slaney & Ashby, 1996). They would feel fear, shame, and stress if they could not achieve such standards. On the other hand, individuals with adaptive perfectionism strive to achieve high standards, but these would be realistic and reasonable, leading to increased self-satisfaction and self-esteem. This latter group has the will to achieve high standards. They are happy to achieve these standards, but if their standards are not fulfilled, they do not feel fear, shame, and stress (Kim et al., 2015).

The negative impacts of maladaptive perfectionism have led many researchers to be increasingly interested in investigating perfectionism (Feist et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2017).

Religiosity is one of the variables that many studies often associated with perfectionism (Abdel-Khalek, 2011; Adams, 2018; Allen & Wang, 2014; Ashby & Huffman, 1999). Religions throughout history require their followers to have high standards of behavior. Religious people who thrive to achieve that high standard may practice it in other areas of life. This is true, especially for Christians, because they do not differentiate between secular and religious life (Beyers, 2014). As a result, previous studies found that Christians' religiousness was linked to perfectionism (Ashby & Huffman, 1999; Crosby et al., 2011; Sica et al., 2002; Timpe, 1989).

The fact that religion could induce perfectionism that can hinder well-being creates a discrepancy because religion has been consistently related to high levels of subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and mental and physical health (Lun & Bond, 2013). The current research was conducted to help clear that discrepancy. The current research was to study the relationship between religiosity and maladaptive perfectionism, allowing us to identify what kind of religiosity induces maladaptive perfectionism.

The concept of religiosity used in the research is the Theory of Religious Orientation. Allport and Ross (1967) explain that individuals have two religious orientation tendencies: intrinsic and extrinsic. Individuals with an intrinsic orientation tend to have a mature faith (Allport, 1950) and internalize their religious teachings (Allport & Ross, 1967). On the other hand, individuals dominated by extrinsic orientation would use their religion to satisfy their own needs, such as achieving protection or security, self-justification, status, and other personal needs (Allport & Ross, 1967).

Considering Indonesia is a collectivist culture, Indonesians tend to listen to society's expectations, especially their loved ones (Hofstede et al., 2010). Parents in Indonesia usually push their children to perform well in school (Hidayah, 2012). Children typically want to make their parents happy and proud of them by having good grades that make some of them fall into maladaptive perfectionism. People with extrinsic religious orientation are more prone to fall into maladaptive perfectionism because they tend to use religion for their gain. For example, they will pray hard before examinations to get good grades and become disappointed when they do not get what they pray for. On the other hand, people with intrinsic religious orientation may exhibit the same behavior as those with extrinsic orientation. Still, they are not disappointed when the results are not as expected because their religiousness is not self-oriented.

Even though Indonesia is a very religious country, as revealed by the Gallup Survey result in 2017, and their youths are not immune from perfectionism, research investigating the relationship between religious orientation and perfectionism is rare in Indonesia. Considering culture influences

the relationship between religion and other aspects of life, the relationship between religious orientation and perfectionism may differ from previous studies because of cultural differences (Saroglou, 2003). Therefore, it is important to know what kind of religiosity may cause maladaptive perfectionism in Indonesia.

Considering the phenomena described above, this research is interested in thoroughly investigating religious orientation's influence on perfectionist college students' maladaptive perfectionism. This study was conducted in Indonesia and focused particularly on individuals with Christian religious group to enable comparative insights with Western studies, which tend to be predominated by Christian samples. We hypothesized that there will be a significant influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation on perfectionist college students' maladaptive perfectionism.

METHODS

Participants

A total of 220 Christian college students from Christian university in Tangerang participated by fulfilling the questionnaire. The inclusion criteria for further data analysis were that they were between 18–25 years old and they met the cutoff score to be in the perfectionist group. They were considered perfectionist when they scored 42 or above on Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) (Slaney et al., 2001). The final sample comprised of 82 participants (65% were female) that met the inclusion criteria. The remaining data could not be used due to incomplete data or did not meet study criteria.

Design

This study used a cross-sectional, non-experimental design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was used because the data was collected on one time only, there was no manipulation made on the participants, which aligns to the purpose of the study: to investigate the effect of religious orientation on perfectionism.

Procedure

Before data collection, the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) was adapted to Indonesia using the forward and backward translation method adhering to the translation procedure by

International Test Commission (2017). The forward translation to the Indonesian language was done by an Indonesian who took master's degree in Psychology in Australia. The backward translation was done by a native speaker who understands the Indonesian language well. The English translation was then compared with the original scale. As both the English translation and the original scale have similar meaning, the translation was considered to be correct. The Indonesian adaptation of APS-R and the I/E-Revised and Single-Item Scales were then distributed to college students. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to sign the informed consent before being able to participate. The ethical aspect of the study has been reviewed by the author's institution.

Instruments

Questionnaires were used as the research instruments. Maladaptive perfectionism was measured with the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R; Slaney et al., 2001) and religious orientation was measured with I/E-Revised and Single-Item Scales (Gorsuch & McPhrenson, 1989). APS-R had two parts that were used in this study (Slaney et al., 2001). The first part consisted of seven items on the 7-Likert scale (e.g., "I have high standards for my performance at work or at school") and was designed to determine whether an individual was a perfectionist or not. The second part consisted of 12 items on the 7-Likert scale (e.g., "I often feel frustrated because I can't meet my goals") to measure discrepancy. The level of discrepancy determined whether someone had adaptive or maladaptive perfectionism. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was .76 for the standards subscale and .94 for the discrepancy subscale.

The I/E-Revised and Single-Item Scale (Gorsuch & McPhrenson, 1989) consists of 14 items that are rated using a 5-point Likert scale and had been adapted by Wijaya et al. (2018) to the Indonesian language. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the intrinsic orientation dimension was .85 and was .71 for extrinsic orientation. Sample item for intrinsic orientation was "I enjoy reading about my religion", while for extrinsic religion was "I go to church because it helps me to make friend."

Analysis Techniques

The data analysis strategy used in this research was the Pearson Product-Moment correlation and proceeded using multiple linear regression to investigate the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation on maladaptive perfectionism (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012).

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The normality of all variables in this study was tested using skewness and kurtosis value (George & Mallery, 2010). As skewness and kurtosis of discrepancy, intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation were all between -1 and +2, all these three variables were normally distributed.

Using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test, it was found that there was a significantly negative correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and maladaptive perfectionism ($r_{(80)} = -.32$, p < .05, $r^2 = .1$). Meanwhile, for extrinsic religious orientation, there was no significant correlation with maladaptive perfectionism ($r_{(80)} = .19$, p > .05, $r^2 = .04$). Table 1 summarizes the correlation matrix of study variables.

Table 1.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Studied Variables

	Discrepancy	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Discrepancy			
Intrinsic	32*		
Extrinsic	.19	-17	

Note: * = Significant at .05 level

However, multiple linear regression results showed that intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation had simultaneously significant effects on maladaptive perfectionism (F(2,79) = 7.6, p = .00, $R^2 = .16$). Participants' maladaptive perfectionism is equal to 68.17 - 1*intrinsic religious orientation + 1.03*extrinsic religious orientation. Participants' maladaptive perfectionism decreased 1 unit for each unit increased in intrinsic religious orientation and increased 1.03 unit for each unit increased in extrinsic religious orientation. Intrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = .36$, t = -2.97, p = .00) had significantly negative effects on maladaptive perfectionism, while extrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = .25$, t = 2.41, p = .02) had significantly positive effects on maladaptive perfectionism among perfectionist Christian college students.

DISCUSSION

The multiple linear regression test result indicated that intrinsic religious orientation has a significantly negative effect on maladaptive perfectionism. In contrast, extrinsic religious orientation has a significantly positive effect on maladaptive perfectionism. As the suppressor effect made the

Allport and Ross (1967) and Krauss and Hood (2013) that intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations are a unitary dimension. Consequently, intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations exist in unison in humans; individuals cannot have one of these aspects of religious orientation. The study results indicated that participants' intrinsic religiosity level is higher than their level of extrinsic religiosity, which may be explained by the characteristic of the participants' institution. Participants in this study were from a Christian university that integrates religion into its curriculum, hence encouraging individuals develop their intrinsic orientation.

The influence of intrinsic orientation on reduced maladaptive perfectionism can be explained by a person characterized with an intrinsic orientation which includes mature faith and the ability to internalize religious teachings (Allport & Ross, 1967; Krauss & Hood, 2013). Individuals with mature faith and internalized religious teachings tend to be better able to accept the conditions they face (Ashby & Huffman, 1999), because they are less likely to be stimulated by impulses or incentives and fear of their surroundings (Allport, 1950). They are more capable of resisting pressure from the surrounding as well (Laher, 2007). Hence, even though they live in the collective society, participants in this study are not tempted to set a high standard that cannot be achieved to satisfy their surroundings.

Therefore, someone with a predominantly intrinsic orientation tends to have more positive behavior and perspective on life (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). Hence, they are more capable of dealing with stressful life events (Gall et al., 2005). Individuals with intrinsic orientation thus tend to reduce their maladaptive perfectionism because their expectations of life are more realistic, leading to self-satisfaction and increased self-esteem (Slaney et al., 2001).

Even if reality does not follow the standards they have set, their self-satisfaction and self-esteem will not be affected because they know that God is full of grace and forgiveness. Therefore, their commitment, beliefs, and relationship with God will help them understand that the discrepancy between their standards and reality brings them closer to God and will search for the positive aspects of events happening to them (Park & Fenster, 2004).

On the other hand, the significant effect of extrinsic orientation on maladaptive perfectionism can be explained by the characteristics of someone with extrinsic orientation who does not live by what their religion teaches them but tends to value the importance of personal gain from their religious activities, including protection, social status and group acceptance (Allport & Ross, 1967). Therefore, people with a high level of extrinsic orientation will care more about input from other people than

from God. As a result, when facing a negative situation that does not meet the standard they set, they will feel stress and frustration. This characterizes someone with a high level of maladaptive perfectionism because their religion only provides shallow support for them (Krauss & Hood, 2013). The stress and frustration they feel also develop because they cannot think like someone with intrinsic orientation. They tend to not find any positive meaning in what happens to them, including transcendent meanings (Koenig, 2005; Park, 2010). Therefore, individuals with extrinsic orientation will be more likely form maladaptive perfectionism.

Maladaptive perfectionism formed by an extrinsic religious orientation can also be explained by someone with those characteristics tending to do things only to satisfy their community (Allport & Ross, 1967). By becoming superior, they feel accepted by their community and receive praise and protection from it: demanded by someone with extrinsic orientation from their social environment (Allport & Ross, 1967). However, if they fail to live up to their standard, they feel greater difficulty developing and maintaining their relationship with the community (Ashby & Huffman, 1999). High maladaptive perfectionism itself gives them a higher sense of threat and danger because they might feel that they are rejected by their community, which means they might not utilize their religion to protect themselves (Ashby & Huffman, 1999).

Furthermore, Candy et al. (2012) explain that individuals with extrinsic orientation tend to be self-serving. A characteristic of people with self-serving religiosity is they tend to approach religion based on a personal understanding is based on the goals and priorities they wish to achieve. This leads to spirituality having little impact on their lives. Therefore, when they face demanding times, their inability to comprehend the grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of God worsens their psychological state of perfectionism (Schnitker & Emmons, 2013), considering that religion only is a shallow support for them and will not change their mindset and behavior in life (Krauss & Hood, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, intrinsic religious orientation had significantly negative effects, while extrinsic religious orientation had significantly positive effects on maladaptive perfectionism. Hence, mature faith and the ability to internalize religious teachings tend to develop a more adaptive perfectionism in perfectionist Christian college students. In contrast, immature faith and the tendency to use their religion to satisfy their own needs increases the level of maladaptation

in perfectionist Christian college students. Through this research, the importance of fostering intrinsic religious orientation in the lives of perfectionist Christian college students is shown.

Participants of this study consisted of many ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia. However, they were limited to upper middle class. Therefore, the result of this study may not be generalized to Christians from other social class status.

Theoretical Recommendation

Participants of this study were limited to Christian college students in a Christian university. It will be interesting if further studies could individuals across religious affiliations from religious-and non-religious-based universities. Saroglou (2017) believed that the effect of religion on psychological functioning depends on religion and culture. Therefore, the effect of religious orientation on maladaptive perfectionism may be different for other religions and cultures.

Practical Recommendation

The result of this study highlighted the role of intrinsic religious orientation in reducing maladaptive perfectionism. As college students in Indonesia tend to have a higher level of perfectionism because of their parent's expectations, parents need to teach their children to develop an intrinsic religious orientation to set a reasonable target and not fall to maladaptive perfectionism. For example, they can teach their children that God loves them unconditionally; they need to try as hard as possible to achieve their target, but if they cannot reach it, God still loves them. The same is also true for college students. They need to remember that God loves them unconditionally. They do not need to perform amazingly to please their God because God needs a relationship and not performance. If they recognize this, they will develop intrinsic religious orientation and adopt adaptive perfectionism to prevent them from various mental health problems.

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