

Understanding intolerance with a better research method

June 13 2019, by Sari Seftiani

Table 1 Characteristic of Respondents

Variables	(%)	Variables	(%)
Age groups		Education attainment	
17 - 21	10.2	Unschoolled	7.7
22 - 26	9.2	Elementary school (SD)	23.0
27 - 31	10.4	Secondary school (SMP)	20.6
32 - 36	13.1	Tertiary school (SMA)	36.8
37 - 41	14.1	Diploma (D1/D2/D3)	3.5
42 - 46	12.5	Graduate (S1)/Diploma IV	7.3
47 - 51	10.5	Master/PhD (S2/S3)	1.1
52 - 56	8.4	Main activity	
57 - 61	6.3	Working	60.2
62 - 64	5.3	Domestic work	29.6
Sex		School	4.4
Male	51.9	Others	5.8
Female	48.1	Expenditure (in the last month)	
Marital status		Rp<1.000.000	29.6
Unmarried	16.5	Rp<1.000.000 - 3.000.000	53.7
Married	77.8	Rp<3.000.000 - 5.000.000	12.2
Divorced	1.6	Rp<5.000.000 - 7.000.000	2.6
Widowed	4.1	Rp<7.000.000 - 9.000.000	0.6
n = 1800		Rp<9.000.000 - above	1.2

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents.

Intolerance has been one of the most discussed topics in Indonesia, a secular country with the world's biggest Muslim majority, due to a rise in cases of intolerance across the country.

Researchers and civil society organisations have carried out various surveys to capture intolerance in Indonesia's diverse society. But [most of them](#) only show percentages of intolerant people in Indonesia's population.

These descriptive studies provide only a general pattern of intolerance in Indonesia. They don't identify factors causing intolerant practices.

We need research on intolerance that goes beyond numbers to find out why and how people become intolerant, and to find solutions.

Using a statistical analysis method called structural equation modelling (SEM), my team and I [identified](#) that strong religious and [ethnic identity](#) is a factor in someone having intolerant attitudes.

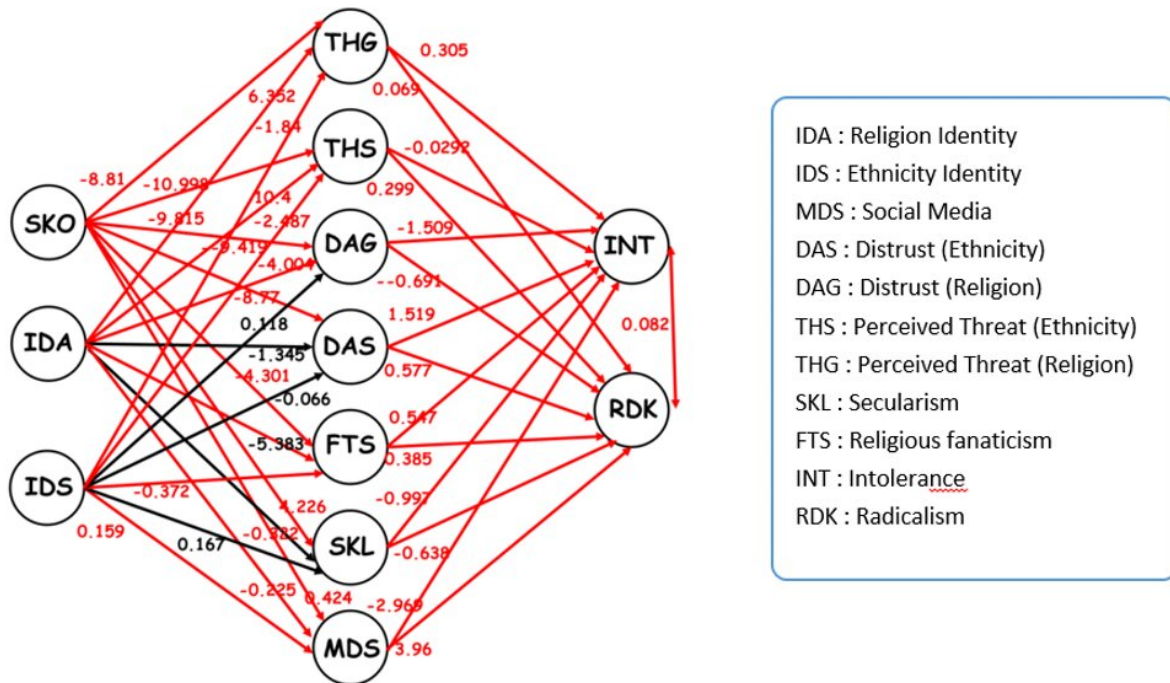
Method beyond statistics

Researchers who have interest in intolerance issues rarely use SEM, a method that can show causality between several dependent variables and independent variables.

This method is usually applied to research on marketing, motivation and level of satisfaction with health facilities. Social science researchers also use it to measure something that's abstract.

But it's also useful to use this method to fill the gaps left by descriptive studies. By using SEM, we can identify and understand factors causing intolerance and to what extent the various factors affect the level of intolerance.

It can also be used to measure something abstract, like tolerance, by using indicators to represent the concept. For our research, we used indicators such as rejection of leaders from different religions and ethnic groups and rejection of neighbours with different religions and ethnicity. Once we've identified these indicators, we can measure the variables and determine their relationships.



Picture 1. Visualization of SEM Results Model Intolerance and Radicalism

Picture 1. Visualisation of SEM results modelling intolerance and radicalism.

Our findings

In 2018, we interviewed 1,800 respondents in nine provinces across Indonesia. We chose respondents who are eligible to vote as some of the questions to measure intolerance related to their views on election candidates with different faiths and ethnicity. Therefore, we used a multistage random sampling to obtain a sample of people aged 17-64 years or married, who under Indonesian law are eligible to vote.

From our analysis we identified factors that cause intolerant attitudes: [religious identity](#) and fanaticism, ethnicity, distrust, secularism, perceived threat and [social media](#).

Our research finds that perceived threat, distrust, secularism, religious fanaticism and social media can trigger intolerance directly.

Our respondents who feel threatened and distrust other religions and ethnicity tend to be intolerant. The same tendency is also found in those who are religious fanatics and heavy social media users.

The research suggests distrust due to religious differences is one central aspect contributing to intolerance. Our respondents say people from different faiths can't be trusted and they tend to exploit others when they are in power. These respondents also feel threatened when people with different faiths become leaders and are more powerful economically and politically.

The research also finds that the more secular a person is, the more tolerant that person is.

We identified these secular people not only based on their religious values but also their belief in the roles of the state to protect the rights of citizens of different religions.

We find that 56.6% of our respondents can accept candidates with different religions to run for government offices. Most of them also don't judge religious and ethnic backgrounds of candidates in presidential and local elections.

Research-based policymaking

Our research suggests SEM can be used as an alternative to explore and understand the issues of intolerance.

We can use the findings as a basis to create a policy to address growing [intolerance](#) in Indonesia.

Finding out how many people in society have intolerant attitudes is important, but it is crucial to dig deeper to understand why.

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