

The Role of Realistic Threats to Prejudice against Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia

Audi Ahmad Rikardi

Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

aar318@ums.ac.id

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Abstract

Minority groups tend to be prejudiced by other groups, including Chinese Indonesian. Chinese Indonesians have massive power in Indonesia's economy and hence are considered a threat to occupation and housing opportunities. This study aims to understand realistic threats that would predict prejudice toward Chinese Indonesian. A quantitative method with a cross-sectional survey was conducted for data collection. Sample criteria include 18 years above and belonging to several ethnicities, Javanese, Sundanese, Maduranese, Bugis, Minangkabau, Malayan, and Batavian. Two hundred forty-one respondents participated in this study. This study found realistic threat predicted prejudice toward Chinese Indonesian. Realistic threat explains 18% prejudice toward Chinese Indonesian. Practical and theoretical implications were discussed further.

Keywords: Chinese, Prejudice, Threat

Introduction

Prejudice is a negative attitude toward other individuals who are members of a group or toward a group as a whole (Brochu & Cadwalader, 2021). One group that experiences prejudice is a minority group. For example, Jews are a minority in Poland that experiences prejudice from Poles because Jews are perceived as a threat to national identity. (Bilewicz & Krzeminski, 2010; Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012). Prejudice against minorities, such as Muslims, refugees, and foreigners also exists against minorities in Germany (Jedinger & Eisentraut, 2020). Intergroup prejudice has an impact, one of which is to hinder the integrity of a group (Váradi and colleagues., 2021). In Indonesia, one group that often experiences prejudice is ethnic Chinese.

Historically, ethnic Chinese in Indonesia experienced discriminatory treatment from the government, one of which occurred in the New Order Era. For example, when ethnic Chinese athletes who competed in the 1996 Olympics had difficulty managing the administration of Indonesian citizenship (Tanasaldy, 2015). Another treatment was the assimilation policy to force ethnic Chinese to change Chinese names

to names considered more Indonesian. Cultural restrictions are also experienced by ethnic Chinese, such as being prohibited from celebrating Chinese New Year to difficulties in accessing public facilities including public schools (Tanasaldy, 2022). However, discriminatory behavior against ethnic Chinese declined after the collapse of the New Order era. During Abdurrahman Wahid's regime, ethnic Chinese were able to celebrate Chinese New Year and show Chinese identity more flexibly (Mustajab, 2017). In addition, ethnic Chinese are recognized as part of ethnic Indonesia through Law No. 12 of 2006 concerning Citizenship (Suharyanto, 2015).

However, the survey conducted by Fossati and colleagues. (2017) found that Indonesians still have a negative perception of Chinese Indonesians. 47.6% agree that Chinese Indonesian culture is still loyal to China, and 42.6% agree that Chinese Indonesian culture is incompatible with Indonesian values. 62% agree that Chinese Indonesians have a major influence on the Indonesian economy. The survey implies negative sentiment and prejudice against Chinese citizens in Indonesia, even though the government has changed their

discrimination policies. Therefore, the search for negative Chinese Indonesian attitudes remains important.

Prejudice against Chinese people also has to do with economic factors. One widespread myth is that the Chinese dominate the Indonesian economy by 60% (Chua, 2004; Setijadi, 2017). Chinese are also considered privileged, greedy, rich, and part of middle-class society (Fossati and colleagues., 2017). The Chinese are also believed to have a strong influence in the control of property (Fakhiransyah, 2023). In conclusion, Chinese dominance in the economy was perceived as a threat by the "indigenous" population. In addition, ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have not been considered fully as Indonesian citizens, in other words ethnic Chinese are considered as foreigners who come from foreign countries (Lie & Sandel, 2020)

Previous research on negative Chinese attitudes in Indonesia found some evidence. Research from Sudiana and colleagues. (2020) found that low intergroup contact was associated with higher prejudice against Indonesians of Chinese descent, with male respondents having higher prejudice than female respondents. Burhan & Sani (2013)

finding national prominence has a role to play in explaining Chinese prejudice, meaning someone with a higher national identity has a negative attitude toward Chinese. In addition, prejudice becomes higher if individuals perceive Chinese as a threat. Anti-Chinese attitudes also emerged during the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2012 when Chinese candidate Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (BTP) ran for Vice Governor. BTP is considered not Indonesian because he is of Chinese ethnicity (Son, 2016). When BTP ran for governor in 2017, anti-China sentiment grew stronger with accusations of blasphemy. Sons and colleagues. (2021) argued that the indictment against BTP was anti-Chinese camouflage.

Theoretical Foundation

Prejudice is a negative attitude towards members of a group or group as a whole. Prejudice can be explained by more than one causal factor. One factor is threat. Stephan and colleagues. (2009), Integrated Threat Theory describes threats as predictors of prejudice. Individuals tend to have negative attitudes toward other groups or group members who are perceived as threatening. Threats can be classified into two types, namely realistic and

symbolic. Realistic threats are threats to individual well-being that include threats to economic and physical health, while symbolic threats are threats to personal norms, values, and worldviews. In Chinese Indonesian prejudice, the author surmises that realistic threat perceptions can predict prejudice because Chinese Indonesians believe that they dominate the Indonesian economy.

Previous research has described threat as a predictor of prejudice in a variety of contexts. Croucher and colleagues (2020) found Americans who perceived Asians as a realistic and symbolic threat had prejudices against Asians during the Covid-19 outbreak. Experiments by Makashvili and colleagues (2018) Finding prejudice against minorities occurs when Georgians perceive ethnic minorities in Georgia as a realistic and symbolic threat.

In Indonesia, threat perception has been used for research on intergroup relations. For example, research (Tjijto et al., 2019) examines threat perceptions and attitudes towards homosexuals in Indonesia. Other research from (Mashuri & Zaduqisti, 2015) found that the growing threat would increase conspiratorial confidence in Western groups in Indonesia. Other research

shows threat perceptions mediating national identity in predicting prejudice against Chinese Indonesians in Medan (Burhan & Sani, 2013). In short, threat is a predictor of prejudice in intergroup contexts.

Based on the previous explanation, this study aims to understand threats as predictors of Chinese Indonesian prejudice. We hypothesize that threats have a role as predictors of Chinese Indonesian prejudice, meaning that individuals who perceive Chinese Indonesians as threats will tend to have negative attitudes towards Chinese Indonesians.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The threat is a predictor of prejudice against Chinese Indonesians, which is treated as a dependent variable.

The criteria for respondents were aged 18 years and over and came from one of these ethnicities—Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Bugis, Malay, Minang, and Betawi. By calculating using G*Power, to achieve 95% statistical strength, at least 74 respondents are required (Kang, 2021). Respondents were recruited through digital pamphlets

containing informed consent and the questionnaire link contained in the Google Form. 246 respondents filled in the shared link and 241 respondents met the respondent criteria.

Threats are measured by realistic threat scales Indonesian versions adapted from Croucher and colleagues (2020). A realistic threat is when individuals perceive Chinese Indonesians as threatening jobs and housing—a realistic threat measured by a 5-point Likert scale of answers (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher perceived realistic threat. One example of an item is, "Due to the presence of Chinese Indonesians, the natives had difficulty finding work."The validity test by Aiken V showed good validity in the range of 0.9-0.95. The scale also has good reliability, 0.91 Cronbach Alpha.

Prejudice against Chinese Indonesians uses a modern racism scale that measures the cognitive component of prejudice (Winata, 2021). The scale of modern racism contains implicit statements about Chinese Indonesians. The scale is measured by a Likert scale of 7 answer points (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher prejudice against

Chinese-Indonesians. One example of an item is, "Chinese descendants gain more economic benefits than they deserve." The validity test by Aiken V showed good validity in the range of 0.9-1. The scale also has good reliability of 0.706 Cronbach Alpha.

Statistical test using Jamovi 2.3 software. The first stage, a descriptive statistical test is carried out. The next stage is to test simple linear regression assumptions, namely the residual normality test and the heteroscedasdisity test which must show a $p>0.05$ value. Next, a simple linear regression is performed for hypothesis testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study contain descriptive statistics, assumption tests, and hypothesis tests.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	M in	Max
Realistic Threats	241	8,24	3,58	3	15
Prejudice	241	21,93	4,97	8	35

Based on table 1. The average score on realistic threats was 8.24. As for prejudice it is 21.93. The standard deviation at realistic threat is 3.58 and

the prejudice is 4.97. The maximum score for a realistic threat score is 15 and prejudice is 35.

Table 2. Residual Normality Assumption Test

Normality Tests

	Statistics	p
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.05	0.68

Table 3. Test of Heteroscedasidity Assumption

Heteroskedasticity Tests

	Statistics	p
Harrison-McCabe	0.44	0.70

Based on the assumption test, all assumption tests, namely the assumption of residual normality and heteroscedasidity, show a $p > 0.05$ value so that all assumptions are met. Next, the authors conducted a hypothesis test with a simple linear regression analysis technique.

Table 4. Coefficient Model - Prejudice

Predictor	Estimate	ON E	t	p
Intercept	17.04	0.73	23.37	<.001
Realistic Threats	0.59	0.08	7.32	<.001

Based on table 4. The coefficient model is composed of the regression

equation $Y = 17.04 + 0.59X + \epsilon$. Any increase in realistic threats would raise prejudice by 0.59. Realistic threats ($B = 0.59$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 7.32$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of prejudice against ethnic Chinese.

Based on table 5. The determination coefficient of the realistic threat explains the prejudice by 18% ($R^2 = 0.18$). The rest was explained by other variables not contained in the study.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination Test

Type	Overall Model Test					
	R	R ²	F	df ₁	df ₂	p
1	0.43	0.18	53.60	1	239	<.001

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of threats in predicting prejudice against Chinese Indonesians. Based on the analysis, the threat is expected to cause prejudice against Chinese Indonesians. Chinese Indonesians were considered a threat to the occupation and home ownership of the local population, therefore Chinese Indonesians were prejudiced. Therefore, this study indicates to reject the null hypothesis.

Chinese Indonesians are considered hardworking, but only think about their group and have no business with other groups. Chinese Indonesians are also considered to have a major influence in the Indonesian economy (Fossati and colleagues., 2017; Kuntjara & Hoon, 2020; Setijadi, 2019). Under these conditions, Chinese Indonesians were considered a threat to the "indigenous" economy, Chinese Indonesians were considered an obstacle to the success of "pribumi". Other studies in America also explain the same thing, Americans have negative attitudes towards Asian Americans because Asian Americans are perceived as a threat to job opportunities (Butz & Yogeewaran, 2011).

The theoretical implication of this study is that Chinese prejudice can be studied with threat theory (Stephan et al., 2009; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Previous research has shown a different finding that a strong ethnic identity predicts prejudice against ethnic Chinese (Bilven et al., 2022). Previous research on prejudice against ethnic Chinese did not involve this theory, for example research Sujatmika & Probowati (2016) use right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation in

explaining ethnic Chinese prejudice. Another study used the hypothesis of high intergroup contact, both directly through online media influencing attitudes towards ethnic Chinese (Pertwi et al., 2020; Sudiana et al., 2020). In this situation, Chinese Indonesians remain perceived as a threat to "indigenous" economic opportunities.

With the perception of a realistic threat to ethnic Chinese, prejudice against is predicted to continue and reconciliation efforts with ethnic Chinese are likely to be hampered (Bilven et al., 2022; Váradi et al., 2021). In addition, according to Tanasaldy (2022) Anti-Chinese attitudes are now deeply rooted among the grassroots of society due to negative sentiments stemming from authorities for a long time during the New Order era. However, there is hope in a generation of young people born after the 1998 riots and who have no collective memory of anti-Chinese sentiment. Currently, the interaction of Indonesia's young generation is more diverse and not exclusive so that attitudes towards other ethnicities become more positive (Herlijanto, 2019; Irene & Forgive, 2020).

**CONCLUSIONS AND
 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusion

The study found that realistic threat perceptions predict negative attitudes towards ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Ethnic Chinese were perceived as a threat to the natives in obtaining jobs and housing. The perceived threat hinders the process of reconciliation with ethnic Chinese, although it does not rule out the possibility that reconciliation has occurred in the younger generation.

Recommendations

Future research is expected to examine prejudice against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia by specializing in the younger generation born after the New Order era and do not have a collective memory of discrimination against ethnic Chinese.

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