

# Analyzing Critical Thinking Skills as A Deterrent to Religious-Based Conflicts

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## Abstract

The study of religious-based conflict is still a hot topic, especially since conflict resolution is different, some of which use cultural, criminal law approaches, and some are resolved with local wisdom. This research aims to analyze the ability to think critically as a deterrent to religious conflicts. By adopting quantitative methods, the data obtained are in the form of numbers and can be analyzed based on statistical procedures with rules and requirements that must be met, such as concrete/empirical, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic. This research procedure starts from the preparation stage, where the researcher determines the problem based on phenomena that occur in the field, determines the research topic, conducts a literature review, looks for a theoretical basis and scope, formulates a problem and framework that will be a reference for research, conducts an initial study, determines the population and sample, and compiles a measuring instrument that will be used when collecting data. The research instrument was a set of questionnaires consisting of informed consent, demographic data, peacemaking behavior, and psychological factors consisting of critical thinking skills. The participants in this study were 2800 people from the general public who were recruited using convenience sampling. The results of the analysis show a large absolute t-value of  $> 1.96$ , which means that the trajectory coefficient is significant. This shows that critical thinking power directly affects peacemaking as a variable to prevent religious conflict.

**Keywords:** *Peaceful Behavior; Critical Thinking; Religious-Based Conflicts*

## Introduction

The word plural, which means plural and diverse, is a gift that can be used as a strength if viewed positively and constructively, but is different if pluralism is viewed negatively, leading to destructive things. Indonesia is a country with complex diversity ranging from cultural diversity, language, religion, and views on values; therefore, it is called a multi-complex country. The Central Bureau of Statistics (2010) provides data that Indonesia has approximately 1,340 ethnic groups, where the diversity of ethnic groups creates a diversity of languages, ways of life, and perspectives on the values believed. Diversity is based on religious beliefs. There are six religions officially recognized by the state: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Diversity, which is considered multi-complex in Indonesia, has become something taboo and is rigid, including religious beliefs. Some views from one religion can discredit the views of other religions if information and viewpoints are not properly digested, resulting in conflict. In the history of Indonesia, there are various religious-based conflicts, one of which is the Ambon

conflict that occurred in 1999. Dhiya Nawwariyah (2021) conducted a study analyzing the root cause of the conflict at that time due to a conspiracy that was not only about religious issues but was used by a handful of people so that there was a prolonged religious-based conflict with fatal destructive power, such as the large number of casualties due to the war between Christianity and Islam.

There were also intra-religious conflicts in Indonesia involving Sunni and Shia in Pandeglang, West Java Province, and Temanggung, Central Java Province, in 2011. However, the conflict between Sunni and Shia was the most severe in East Java. On December 23, 2006, there was an attack on Ijabi followers in Jambesari Village, Bondowoso Regency, and attacks on the YAPI Bangil Islamic boarding school, Shia, from 2010 to 2011. In 2013, a bloody conflict between Shia and Sunni occurred in the Puger area of the Jember Regency due to the holding of a carnival by the Shia Darus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, even though it had previously been banned because of the possibility of clashes (Ramdhoni, 2013). In Indonesia, the history of the social lives of religious communities in the world has never been free from conflict. This can be caused by differences in religious understanding, religious differences, or other factors such as culture and politics (Dodi, 2017).

Furthermore, religion-based conflicts occur in Ahmadiyah adherents. Although referring to the same religion, namely Islam, because it is so multi-complex, one religion has many streams caused by the collision of the legitimacy of the Ahmadiyah group, which is not recognized as a religion in Indonesia, but as a religion-based community organization. Because of this, there is terror against embassies in certain countries, persecution of religious leaders, destruction of places of worship, and suicide bombing directed at people who are considered contrary to their beliefs. The study of religious-based conflicts is still a hot theme, especially since the conflict resolution made is different, some use a cultural legal approach, and some are resolved with local wisdom, such as what happened in three areas of Jambi City, South Sumatra, where there was a conflict due to the establishment of a Christian house of worship in a Muslim-majority area which continued with anarchist movements and was then resolved through consensus deliberations involving-tuo tengganai, traditional leaders, religious leaders and the government (Abdul Halim & Zaki Mubarak, 2020). Moving to the westernmost region of Indonesia, to be precise in Aceh Singkil, the pros and cons of establishing houses of worship still occur even though it has been regulated in the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs No.9 and No. 8 of 2006. In Aceh, it was regulated through Aceh Governor Regulation Number 25 of 2007 regarding the establishment of houses of worship, but it does not receive support from minority communities in Aceh because the regulation is considered to narrow minority opportunities in building houses of worship (Hartani, t.t.).

Religious conflicts that eventually stimulate the emergence of violence are certainly not only interesting but also important to study. In the current context, facilitated by easy access to information, religious-based conflicts not only emerge easily but also escalate easily, especially if the people involved in the conflict do not filter all forms of incoming information. The existence of filtering information and criticizing circulating issues is important to reduce conflict and prevent it before it spreads widely, so critical thinking is needed, or what is called critical thinking as the main guardian of preventing religious-based conflicts. Critical thinking is an important aspect of creating a good and purposeful education (Shiraev & Levy, 2017;

Sternberg & Halpern, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that factors that can encourage intergroup violence include identity, emotions, religiosity (Saroglou, 2020), normative memory and support (Cohrs, 2012), morals (Tangney et al., 2007), and the need for closure (Jost, 2020). One of the dominant factors often discussed is religious fundamentalism, which refers to the belief that there is a clear set of religious teachings that contain fundamental, fundamental, intrinsic, and essential truths about humanity and God. More specifically, there is a term called intratextual fundamentalism, where this belief is based more on religious texts (Williamson et al., 2010; Lazar & Hammer, 2018; Putra & Sukabdi, 2014; Setiawan et al., 2020; Saroglou, 2020). In addition to intratextual fundamentalism, one factor that encourages someone to commit violence is the assumption that there has been injustice or feeling as a victim (Schils & Verhage, 2017). This can also trigger negative emotions such as anger (Claassen, 2016; Mackie & Smith, 2016). In addition to negative emotions, perceptions of injustice can also strengthen a person's ability to take more risks (Pisoiu et al., 2020). If the above variables can lead to acts of violence, individuals' critical thinking skills can help them overcome them. Critical thinking is an important aspect of creating a good and purposeful education (Shiraev & Levy, 2017; Sternberg & Halpern, 2020).

Critical thinking is very important in everyday life, especially when individuals obtain information related to uncertain rumors and opposing political issues. Critical thinking is reflective thinking that actively examines and considers the knowledge received by looking at the supporting perspective of thought that then becomes a belief (Dewey, 1909). Susilowati et al., 2017 explained that what is called analysis is the ability to identify the correct intentions and conclusions among many statements, concepts, and descriptions based on information, opinions, reasons, experiences, and decisions. Evaluation is the ability to assess the credibility of statements or presentations by describing perceptions, experiences, situations, and beliefs to provide logical decisions based on actual inferential relationships between questions, statements, descriptions, or other representations. Therefore, before concluding, among the things that need to be highlighted are those who conveyed the information and the history of the validity of each word spoken during several times of communication with the conveyer of information. Explanation is the ability to provide a statement of the results of the process based on evidence, methodology, concepts, or certain criteria and reasonable considerations to justify what a reason is based on and then present the reason in the form of a convincing and irrefutable argument. Inference is the ability to identify and select elements as well as materials needed to form conclusions that form a hypothesis by paying attention to relevant information and reducing negative consequences such as inaccurate information arising from data, questions, principles, evidence, judgments, opinions, descriptions, statements, beliefs, or other forms of representation. Interpretation is the ability to understand and express the meaning or intent of varied experiences, situations experienced, data, events, decisions that have been considered the basis of experience, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or inference criteria in the form of norms or statements. Finally, self-regulation is related to a person's awareness of controlling their cognition by applying skills to evaluate their abilities and drawing conclusions in the form of questions, confirmation, and validation (Susilowati et al., 2017). The ability of self-regulation can also function when obtaining metacognitive information directly provides direction on how the information will be received and where the conclusions will be forwarded

wisely so that the cohesiveness of the information is not simply spread, especially to unauthorized parties.

Individuals who have critical thinking skills will be able to 1) measure the quality of information sources, 2) determine which information is relevant, 3) distinguish facts and opinions so that conclusions are clean from assumptions, 4) identify and evaluate implied opinions, 5) identify errors, errors, or biases, and 6) identify viewpoints with precision, namely, not one-sided, and 7) evaluate evidence to support opinions (Hanna, 2013). With these abilities, all forms of incoming information will be digested first to make a comprehensive conclusion that can be accounted for, as well as a basis for scientifically validated beliefs. The digestive system in critical thinking can provide a view that esoterically (culturally) provides the direction that all religions have the same level, namely, the same path to God (Yunus, 2014). With such thinking, it is hoped that there will be a common thought that the matter of belief is in the personal realm and does not need to be contested; otherwise, harmony with adherents of different beliefs is a necessity that must be built on the basis of the principle of unity.

People with high critical thinking and emotional intelligence can make accurate decisions, evaluate their decisions, and regulate emotions to improve their abilities. Characters or traits possessed by those who think critically include always seeking truth about information, an open mind, analytical, systematic, high self-confidence, inquisitiveness, and maturity in judgment. The antithesis of these habits are those who are always close to the problem, dishonest in ideas and decisions, intolerant, ignorant, disruptive, do not believe in reason, different, and too simple (Facione, 2000). In this study, researchers were interested in analyzing critical thinking skills to prevent religious conflicts. The problem formulations of this research include the following: How does the ability to think critically become a deterrent to religious-based conflict; and 2. how can we model the psychological factors of critical thinking that influence feelings of peace?

## Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach to test the model regarding the analysis of critical thinking skills and its effect on Just Peacemaking. This research procedure starts at the preparation stage, where the researcher determines the problem based on the phenomena that occur in the field, determines the research topic, conducts a literature study or literature review, looks for the theoretical basis and scope, formulates a problem and framework that will be a reference for research, conducts an initial study, determines the population and sample, and compiles the measuring instruments to be used when collecting data. At the implementation stage, the researcher distributed questionnaires using Google Forms and collected the responses given by the subject. At the data processing stage, the researcher scores the results of the respondent's answers and analyzed the tabulated data using statistical applications. In the last stage, the researcher made a report by drawing conclusions based on the results of the data analysis. The number of participants was 2800 people (general public) dominated by female respondents, as many as 1814 respondents (65.8%), and the rest were men (986 respondents, 35.2%). In the age category, most were 20-25 years old, as many as 1893 respondents (67.6%), and the least were 36-45 years old, with as many as seven respondents (0.3%). The most dominant are Surabaya City (258 respondents, 9.2%) and Yogyakarta City

(466 respondents, 16.6%), with ethnicity dominated by Javanese (1294 respondents, 46.2%). The most popular organization is Nahdlatul Ulama, with 673 respondents (24.0%), and as many as 1246 respondents (44.5 %) did not follow the organization. Distribution data were collected using convenience sampling. The research instrument was a set of questionnaires consisting of informed consent, demographic data, peacemaking behavior, and psychological factors related to critical thinking ability. The questionnaire was compiled using Google Forms and distributed through social media. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling, which aims to test the suitability of the model presented with empirical data.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

The analysis in this study consisted of descriptive analysis, structural model analysis, causal relationship analysis, and hypothesis testing. Descriptive analysis is useful for providing a factual and accurate description of the research subject without intending to draw general conclusions. Structural model analysis aims to test the suitability of a model based on empirical data. The causal relationship analysis aims to conclude, in this case, to determine whether the variables studied have an influence.

#### **a. Descriptive Variable of Just Peacemaking**

To find out an overview of the perceptions of 2800 respondents on the *Just Peacemaking* variable, a descriptive analysis of the mean score category was used. *Just Peacemaking* has five dimensions, all outlined as 20 question items. The results of data processing show that the overall response to *Just Peacemaking* is classified as moderate with an average score of 3.64 which is in the range (of 2.68 - 4.33). The highest question item is item JP20 which is the Initiative to Reduce Threats dimension, which is 3.97 and the lowest is item JP9 which is the Nonviolent Direct Action dimension, which is 3.47.

#### **b. Descriptive of Critical Thinking Variable**

To find out an overview of the perceptions of 2800 respondents on the Critical Thinking variable, descriptive analysis of the mean score category was used. Critical Thinking has 7 dimensions which are all poured out as many as 50 question items. The results of data processing show that the overall response to Critical Thinking is classified as moderate with an average score of 4.21 which is in the range (of 2.68 - 4.33). The highest question item is item CTDS50 which is the Self-Confident dimension which is 4.25 and the lowest is item CTDS5 which is the Truth-Seeking dimension which is 4.16.

### **Structural Model Analysis**

After calculating and analyzing *Confirmatory Factor Analysis* (CFA), the latent score variable (LVS) can be measured for each dimension to be reduced to indicators on each variable. Analysis of the structural model includes several things, namely:

### Model 1 Overall Fit Test

GoF Size	Value	Suitability Level
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0,97	Good Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0,031	Good Fit
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0,99	Good Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0,99	Good Fit
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0,99	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0,99	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0,99	Good Fit

**Table 5.6 Goodness of Fit Structural Equation Model (SEM) 1**

In the table above, it can be seen that the GFI, RMSEA, NNFI, NFI, RFI, IFI and CFI values fall into the *good fit* category. So it can be concluded that the overall fit of the model is very good.

### Model 2 Overall Fit Test

GoF Size	Value	Suitability Level
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0,83	Marginal Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0,071	Good Fit
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0,93	Good Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0,93	Good Fit
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0,93	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0,94	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0,94	Good Fit

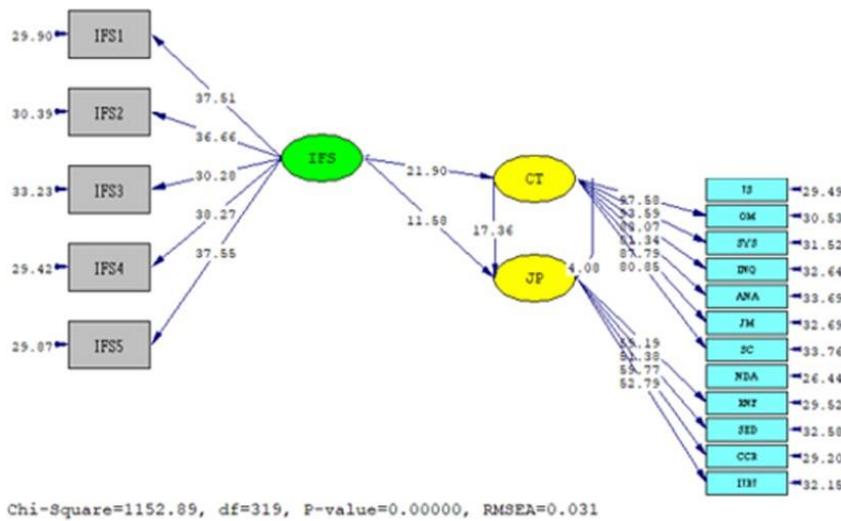
**Table 5.7 Goodness of Fit Structural Equation Model (SEM) 2**

In the table above, it can be seen that the GFI value is 0.83 which falls into the marginal fit category, which means that the value is still below 0.9 but still in the range of 0.80 - 0.90. However, the RMSEA, NNFI, NFI, RFI, IFI and CFI values fall into the good fit category. So

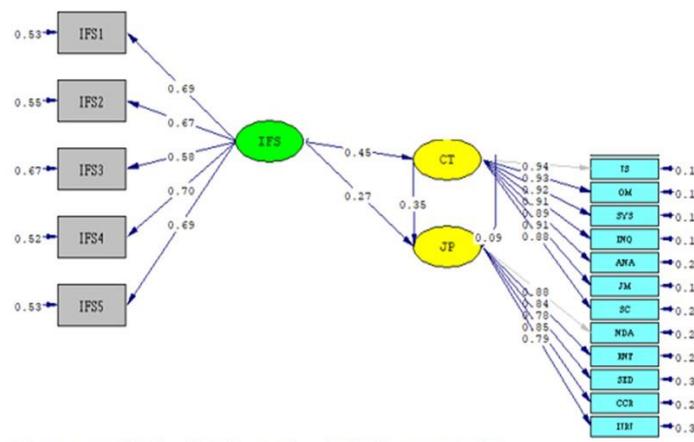
it can be concluded that the overall fit of the model is very good.

## Causal Relationship Analysis Model 1

Statistical testing for the causal relationship of this structural model is carried out with a significance level of 5% so that the critical value of the t-value is  $\pm 1.96$ . The estimation results of all research causal relationships can be seen in the following LISREL 8.80 model 1 output results:



### **Structural Model (*T*-Value) Model 1**



### **Structural Model (*Standardized Solution*) Model 1**

From the results of the LISREL 8.80 output above, it can be seen that for the causal relationship equation above, it can be seen that:

### a. T-value and Coefficient of Structural Equation

From the causal equation above, if the t-value is large, the absolute value  $> 1.96$  means that the path coefficient is significant (Wijayanto, 2008). Based on the figure above, it can be seen that there are 5 significant trajectory coefficients and no insignificant trajectory coefficients. The interpretation of the trajectory coefficients will be further explained in the hypothesis testing section.

#### b. Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) Structural Equations

### Structural Equations

$$CT = 0.45 * IFS, \text{ Errorvar.} = 0.80, R^2 = 0.20$$

(0.020) (0.025)  
21.90 31.46

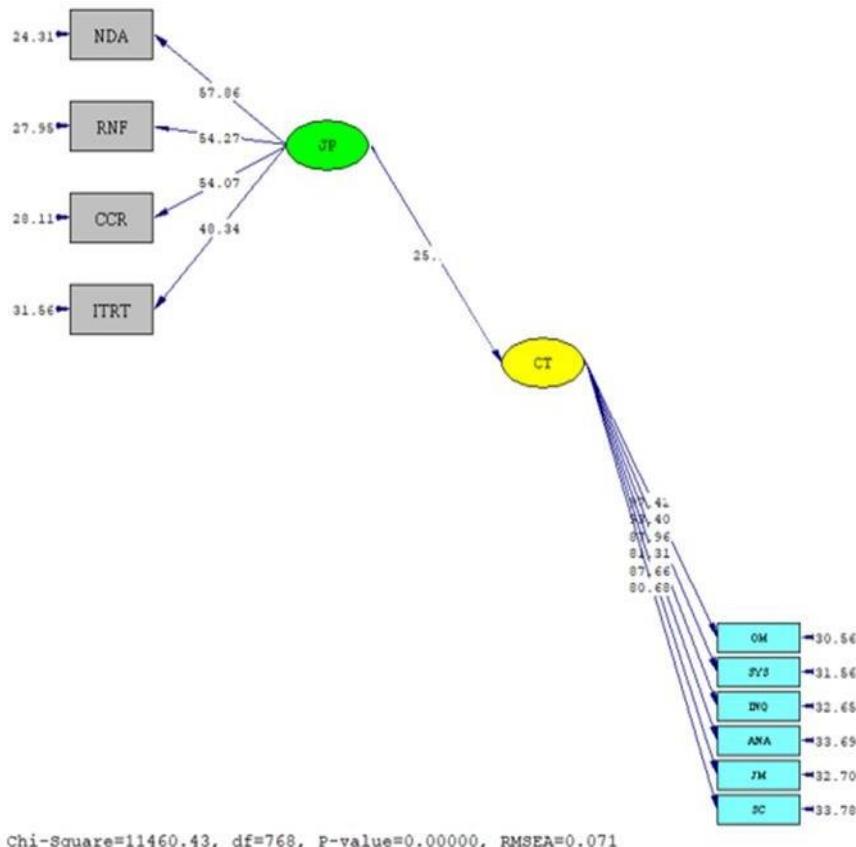
$$JP = 0.085 * MI + 0.35 * CT + 0.27 * IFS, \text{ Errorvar.} = 0.68, R^2 = 0.32$$

(0.021) (0.020) (0.024) (0.025)  
4.08 17.36 11.58 27.64

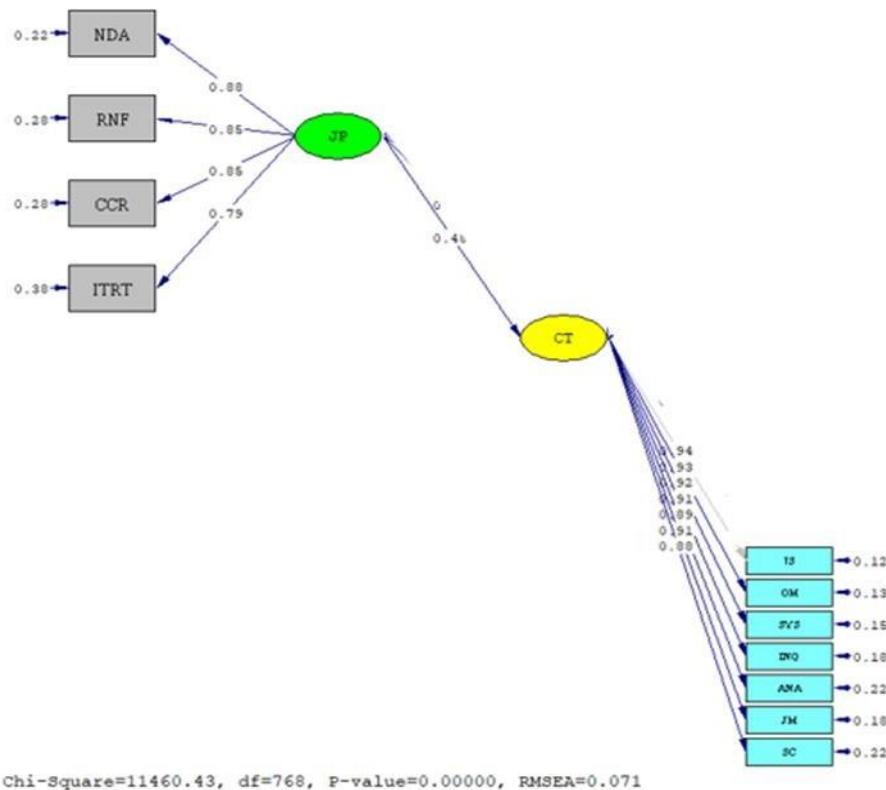
From the structural form equation above, we can see the R<sup>2</sup> value of each equation. The R<sup>2</sup> value serves to show how much each independent variable is able to explain the dependent variable, the following is the structural form equation analysis:

1. *Critical Thinking* has an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.20 which indicates that Just Peacemaking can explain 20% of the variance of Critical Thinking, while the rest is explained by other factors.
2. *Just Peacemaking* has an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.32 which indicates that Critical Thinking can explain 32% of the variance of Just Peacemaking, while the rest is explained by other factors.

### 1.1.2 Model 2 Causal Relationship Analysis



**Figure 4.11 Structural Model (*T-Value*) Model 2**



**Figure 4.14 Structural Model (Standardized Solution) Model 2**

From the results of the LISREL 8.80 output above, it can be seen that for the causal relationship equation above, it can be seen that:

a. T-value and Coefficient of Structural Equation

From the causal equation above, if the t-value is large, the absolute value  $> 1.96$  means that the path coefficient is significant (Wijayanto, 2008). Based on the figure above, it can be seen that there are 9 significant trajectory coefficients and 2 insignificant trajectory coefficients. The interpretation of the trajectory coefficients will be explained further in the hypothesis testing section.

b. Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ )

Structural Equations

$$\begin{aligned} CT &= 0.48 * JP, \text{ Errorvar.} = 0.77, R^2 = 0.23 \\ &\quad (0.019) \quad (0.024) \\ &\quad 25.17 \quad 32.17 \end{aligned}$$

From the structural form equation above, we can see the  $R^2$  value of each equation. The  $R^2$  value serves to show how much each independent variable is able to explain the dependent variable, here is the structural form equation analysis: Critical Thinking has an  $R^2$  of 0.23 which indicates that Just Peacemaking can explain 23% of the variance of Critical Thinking, while the rest is explained by other factors.

### 1.1.3 Hypothesis Testing

#### 3.1.4.1 Hypothesis Testing for Model 1

a. Direct Effect

In this study, the hypothesis is seen in the direct effect. Hypothesis testing analysis was carried out with a significance level of 5%, resulting in a *critical t-value* of  $\pm 1.96$ . The

hypothesis is accepted if the *t-value* obtained is  $\geq 1.96$ , while the hypothesis is not supported if the t-value obtained is  $< 1.96$ . The following is a table of hypothesis testing to answer all research questions:

**Table 1. Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	T-Count	T-Table	Description
<i>Thinking affects JustPeacemaking</i>	25,17	1,96	Significant

Source: LISREL 8.80 *Output* Results Processed by Researchers

Based on the table above which contains the conclusion of the results of the research model hypothesis, it can be concluded that the *t-value* shown by hypothesis 12 is 25.17 greater than 1.96. So it can be concluded that *Critical Thinking has a positive effect on Just Peacemaking* significantly. Thus, hypothesis 12 can be accepted and it can be concluded that the higher *Critical Thinking, the higher Just Peacemaking*.

#### b. Indirect influence

In this study, there is 1 (one) hypothesis for indirect effects. Hypothesis testing analysis was carried out with a significance level of 5%, resulting in a *critical t-value* of  $\pm 1.96$ . The hypothesis is accepted if the *t-value* obtained  $\geq 1.96$ , while the hypothesis is not supported if the t-value obtained  $< 1.96$ . The following is a table of hypothesis testing to answer indirect effects:

Indirect Effects of KSI on ETA

IFS	
-----	
CT	--
JP	0.19
	(0.01)
	13.62

**Table 2. Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Intervening
Indirect influence	<i>Peacemaking and Critical Thinking</i>
Critical Thinking affects <i>Just Peacemaking</i>	0,19

Source: LISREL 8.80 *Output* Results Processed by Researchers

Based on the table above which contains the conclusion of the research model hypothesis results, it can be concluded that there is 1 significant indirect effect based on the t-count value (13.62) which is greater than the t-table (1.96), namely *Critical Thinking* has a positive effect on *Just Peacemaking*. The weight of the effect is 0.19.

### 3.1.4.2 Hypothesis Testing for Model 2

As explained in the previous chapter, in this study, the hypothesis testing analysis was carried out with a significance level of 5%, resulting in a critical t-value of  $\pm 1.96$ . The hypothesis is accepted if the t-value obtained is  $\geq 1.96$ , while the hypothesis is not supported if the t-value obtained is  $< 1.96$ . The following is a table of hypothesis testing to answer all research questions:

Hypothesis	T-Count	T-Table	Description
<i>Critical Thinking</i> affects <i>Just Peacemaking</i>	25,17	1,96	Significant

Based on the table above which contains the conclusion of the results of the research model hypothesis, it can be concluded that the t-value shown by hypothesis 12 is 25.17 greater than 1.96. So it can be concluded that Just Peacemaking has a positive effect on Critical Thinking significantly. Thus, hypothesis 12 can be accepted and it can be concluded that the higher Just Peacemaking, the higher Critical Thinking.

## 1.2 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Critical Thinking plays a role in the formation of peaceful behavior known as Just Peacemaking. This is in line with previous studies which state that beliefs based on religious texts can encourage behaviors between religious groups (Williamson et al., 2010; Lazar & Hammer, 2018; Putra & Sukabdi, 2014; Setiawan et al., 2020; Saroglou, 2020). In addition, critical thinking skills have also been shown to play a role in encouraging peace-related behavior. And with that sense of peace, conflict can be prevented.

Critical thinking is a key aspect of creating a good and purposeful education (Shiraev & Levy, 2017; Sternberg & Halpern, 2020). People with critical thinking and high emotional intelligence can make accurate decisions, evaluate decisions, and regulate their emotions to improve their skills. A character or trait possessed by someone who thinks critically. It involves a constant search for the truth about information, openness, analysis, systematization, high self-confidence, curiosity, and judgment. The antithesis of such habits is those who always approach problems, are dishonest in ideas and decisions, intolerant, careless, obnoxious, suspicious of reason, different, and too simple (Facione, 2000).

Individuals who have critical thinking skills will be able to 1) measure the quality of information sources 2) be able to determine which information is relevant and not 3) be able to distinguish facts and opinions so that conclusions are clean from assumptions 4) identify and evaluate implied opinions 5) be able to identify errors or errors or biases 6) be able to identify the point of view with precision, which is not one-sided 7) the ability to evaluate evidence to support opinions (Hanna, 2013). (Hanna, 2013). With these abilities, all forms of incoming information will be digested first to make a comprehensive conclusion that can be accounted for as well as a basis for scientifically validated beliefs. The digestive system in critical thinking can provide a view that esoterically (culture) which provides direction that all

religions have the same level, namely the same path to God (Yunus, 2014). (Yunus, 2014). With such thinking, it is hoped that there will be a common thought that the matter of belief is in the personal realm and does not need to be contested, otherwise harmony with adherents of different beliefs is a necessity that must be built based on the principle of unity.

This research will use an integration of the Justification Systems Theory and Intergroup Emotion Theory approaches to explain the psychological process of interfaith violence that can be prevented with critical thinking skills. The justification systems theory approach explains that the beginning of violence usually starts when there is a perception of injustice and inequality in society, where these issues arise in daily activities (Jost, 2020). These perceptions or feelings can develop from personal experiences (direct discrimination), general tendencies such as empathy, or even not related to themselves at all. In addition to the justification system theory, the intergroup emotion theory, in this case, the emotion of anger, is assumed to trigger violence (Mackie & Smith, 2016). However, this can be anticipated with the ability to think critically (Arifin, 2020). (Arifin, 2020)

## **Summary**

Religious-based conflicts that ultimately trigger the emergence of various forms of violence are certainly not only interesting but also important to study, conflicts not only arise easily but can also easily escalate. In this study, researchers want to dig deeper into what factors encourage the emergence of sectarian conflict. Individual factors are the first thing to be evaluated before other external factors, namely the ability to think critically which is used as the first filter in the realm of cognition. This factor is interrelated with peacemaking behavior and is therefore important to identify. The results show that psychological factors that include critical thinking skills can play a role in the formation of peace-related behaviors and with peaceful behaviors religious-based conflicts can be anticipated.

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