

REGULAR ARTICLE

The impact of religious identification on national identification and engagement in collective action to support Rohingya refugees: A comparison between Australia and Malaysia

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Abstract

Research comparing how people engage in collective action in different nations to promote justice for disadvantaged groups is scarce. We investigated the effects of national identification (glorification/attachment) and religious identification across two nations (Australia, $N=358$ and Malaysia, $N=300$) on collective action to support Rohingya refugees of the 2017 refugee crisis. Specifically, we tested whether the relationship between national identification and collective action would be moderated by religious identification, and whether the latter would be moderated by nation. As glorification is associated with prejudice against other groups within the nation, we predicted and found support for the hypothesis that glorification of Australian identity would be a negative predictor of collective action, regardless of religion. In contrast, we hypothesized that in the Malaysian context, glorification and collective support would be shaped by religious (Islamic) identity which represented a social category shared by Malays and Rohingya refugees. Results showed that only when Malays identified with Islam, the relationship between glorification and collective support was *positive*. Unexpectedly, attachment and identification with Christianity or no-religion inhibited collective support in the Australian context. The findings challenge commonly held views about glorification and attachment and enhance insight in cross-national solidarity in a world of increasing global interdependence.

KEY WORDS

collective action, cross-national differences, intersection of religious commitment and national identification

“I’m here today not as Najib Razak [Malaysian Prime Minister], but as a Malaysian and a Muslim. There is no assembly more honourable than that which is done for Islam” (Ko Ko Gyi, 2016).

In 2017, the ongoing tensions between Rohingya Muslims (a minority group in Myanmar) and Rakhine Buddhists (who represent most of the population in

Myanmar) escalated into widespread, deadly, rioting. The Rohingyas fled to neighbouring countries which responded differently to the influx of refugees. Some nations accepted the Rohingya refugees (e.g., Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia), whereas other nations did not (e.g., Australia, India, Thailand). In this article, we examine why some people are more supportive of the Rohingya refugees than others. In doing so, we focus on two central arguments, anchored around the psychology of

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social identities. First, people will vary in their national affiliations. National identification is important as it can explain why some people behave more hostile to out-groups than others. Those who identify in a glorifying way with the nation act usually intolerant towards ethnic minority groups in the country, whereas those who identify in an attached way (i.e., those who feel committed to all members in the nation, irrespective of who they are) have often a more inclusive attitude (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006). Second, people will vary in their religious affiliations. Religious identification is important because it has been found to shape psychological and social processes (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Are there circumstances in which glorification is less, or not, associated with intolerance towards ethnic minority members? In the quote above, Najib's words reflect a shared religious identity. We propose that sharing a religious identity can alter the commonly found link between glorification and prejudiced attitudes towards ethnic minority groups such as the Rohingya refugees. That is, national and religious identity may interact to help explain solidarity-based action for refugees. We test these claims in a Western country (Australia, which did not allow Rohingya refugees to enter the country) and an Asian country (Malaysia, which allowed refugees to enter but did not offer state support).

In 2018, there were more than 62,000 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. However, Rohingya refugees have no legal status and consequently cannot begin a stable way of life (Looi, 2018). Rohingya refugees who fled to Australia in 2017 were detained in offshore detention centres in Nauru and on Manus Island, both of which have been condemned by international authorities (Arraf, 2018). The Rohingya crisis forms thus the background for our research on collective action to stand in solidarity with Rohingya refugees.

Collective action is defined as, “any action that... aims to challenge or protect the status quo and can be conducted by low-status groups, high-status groups, or groups not distinguished by status position” (Becker, 2012, p. 19). Social identification is a well-established driver of collective action (e.g., see Van Zomeren et al., 2008, for a meta-analysis), including collective action across cultures (Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021). The theory of collective action is based on the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA, Van Zomeren et al., 2008). According to SIMCA, group identification predicts directly collective action and indirectly by group efficacy (i.e., the belief that the group can accomplish a goal through joined effort) and group-based injustice (i.e., perceived unfairness commonly specified by an experienced emotion). The current contribution focuses on identification, as the key factor within SIMCA, and adopts a novel approach to examine how multiple identities shape collective action. Multiple identities can be based on diverse national, religious, and cultural affiliations, as well as the intersection of those identities (e.g., Verkuyten et al., 2014; Verkuyten

& Martinovic, 2012; Wibisono et al., 2019). In our research, we investigate how some aspects of national identity (glorification/attachment) and combinations of (religious/national) identities facilitate and constrain action in the context of Rohingya refugees who were forced to flee from Myanmar.

1 | NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION: GLORIFICATION AND ATTACHMENT

National identity is a crucial social identity because national identity influences how people perceive themselves, others, and society (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Moreover, although some research considers national identification as a unidimensional construct (e.g., Chayinska et al., 2017; Stathi et al., 2019; Wibisono et al., 2019), it is widely understood that national identification is a multidimensional construct. Indeed, researchers have distinguished between two different modes of national identification. For example, Schatz et al. (1999) defined blind patriotism as “a rigid and inflexible attachment to country, characterized by unquestioning positive evaluation, staunch allegiance, and intolerance of criticism”. They defined constructive patriotism as a “‘critical loyalty’, questioning and criticism of current group practices that are driven by a desire for positive change” (p. 153).

Recently, researchers have focused on national collective narcissism defined as the belief that one's nation is exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment but underappreciated by other countries (Federico et al., 2023; Golec de Zavala et al., 2019). Collective narcissists believe that their in-group deserves better outcomes than other groups, but that they never get these outcomes. Hence, they feel permanently threatened by others, but also overstate these threats (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). As such, collective narcissism can motivate violent actions. National collective narcissism differs from blind patriotism in that the former is driven by a constant need to receive confirmation about their greatness, whereas the latter is driven by offering rigid devotion to one's nation.

In the current research, we follow Roccas et al.'s (2006) approach to national identification and their distinction between glorification and attachment. Although there are similarities between their glorification and attachment, and blind and constructive patriotism, respectively, Roca's and colleagues' (Roccas et al., 2006, 2008) stated explicitly how glorification and attachment are related to intergroup attitudes based on Tajfel's (1978) definition of social identity. This definition includes an evaluative dimension; superiority of in-group and deference to national symbols and leaders (i.e., glorification), as well as a cognitive dimension (in-group is part of my self-concept) and affective dimensions (commitment to in-group) (i.e., attachment). Blind and constructive

patriotism are characterized by one dimension, evaluation and affect, respectively (Roccas et al., 2006, 2008). Thus, Roccas et al.'s definition of national identification provides a broader understanding of intergroup relations.

Roccas et al. (2006) argued that a unidimensional approach to national identification obscures qualitative differences between people who glorify their nation and people who are attached to their nation. Glorification is associated with an unconditional dedication to the country, the nation's policies, symbols, and values, as well as rejection of in-group criticism. Glorification is also linked to feelings of in-group superiority and prejudice against and *exclusion* of other groups. This is especially the case for ethnic minorities within the nation because they are perceived as a threat to one's social identity (Berndsen et al., 2018; Berndsen & Gausel, 2015, 2019; Berndsen, Thomas, et al., 2017; Berndsen, Tiggemann, & Chapman, 2017; Leidner et al., 2010; Roccas et al., 2006).

In contrast, attachment involves a relatively more *inclusive* commitment to all people within the nation (Roccas et al., 2006). Attachment does not preclude criticism of the nation or its authorities as an expression of in-group loyalty (Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Packer & Miners, 2014; Schatz & Staub, 1997). Hence, attachment has been found to be associated with supportive attitudes towards group members who are excluded by the in-group, but only when effects of glorification are controlled for (Berndsen et al., 2018; Berndsen & Gausel, 2015, 2019; Berndsen, Thomas, et al., 2017; Berndsen, Tiggemann, & Chapman, 2017; Leidner et al., 2010; Roccas & Berlin, 2016; Roccas et al., 2006). For example, Berndsen and Gausel (2015) have shown that attached identification with one's nation was associated with commitment to supportive collective action for an ethnic minority group, whereas glorifying identification was not significantly associated. Further, Selvanathan and Leidner (2020) found that glorification was associated with support for non-normative collective action, whereas attachment was associated with normative collective action in the context of the ongoing Israel–Palestinian conflict. These and other findings suggest that even a single national identity can function quite differently to promote or undermine solidarity for disadvantaged out-groups. It is therefore imperative to distinguish between the two modes of national identification in the context of examining support for Rohingya refugees.

Further, the research presented above about the two modes of national identification has predominantly been conducted in WEIRD societies. These are samples from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic countries (Henrich et al., 2010). Little is known about whether the concepts of glorification and attachment are comparable across cultures, but Agostini and Van Zomeren (2021) recently demonstrated that the link between identification and action is more culturally contingent than other motives. Our tests will therefore incorporate measurement invariance to assess whether

glorification and attachment are similar or different across the Australian and Malaysian samples. In doing so, our study fits with the call from van Zomeren (2019) to examine the identity *content* so that we understand what national identification means to participants and what they stand for (i.e., collective action).

2 | INTERSECTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Religious identity has been found to affect social-psychological processes due to the belief in a unique sacred worldview (e.g., the existence of Mohammed or God; Ysseldyk et al., 2010, p. 62). In this article, we are interested in the intersection of religious and national identities. The term “intersectionality” was articulated by Crenshaw (1989) to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics interconnect with each other. For example, Wibisono et al. (2019) showed that relative to moderate Muslim fundamentalism, strong Muslim fundamentalism lowered the link between religious identity and national identity among Indonesians' willingness to engage in collective action that supports a constitutional change to implement Islamic laws (Sharia). This is because (secular) national identification is perceived to be conflicting with strong religious fundamentalism. In contrast, those who adhere to moderate Muslim fundamentalism perceived religious and national identity as compatible identities and were less willing to engage in collective action. Thus, the interaction between religious identity and religious fundamentalism shaped national identification and subsequent collective action intention.

In our study, we investigated how religious identity and national (glorification/attachment) identity interact to shape collective action to support Rohingya refugees in Australia and Malaysia. Although a glorifying national identity implies exclusion of ethnic minority out-group members such as the Rohingya refugees in Western countries, we argue that a shared religious identity (Islam) will alter the exclusion behaviour associated with glorification. A shared social identity means that members of different groups share a common category resulting in supportive interactions, cooperation, and trust which promote coordinated collective action (e.g., Han et al., 2014; Haslam et al., 2012; Neville et al., 2022; Neville & Reicher, 2011). Accordingly, differences between national social groups (e.g., different countries; Myanmar vs. Malaysia) can be bridged when these groups share a religious social identity (e.g., Islamic religion). In the context of religious identity, for instance, it has been found that those who identify with a religion develop a more positive view towards former out-group members of the same faith by recategorizing themselves as members of the same group

(e.g., Baysu et al., 2018). Thus, the Rohingya refugees and Muslim Malays belong to different national groups. They share, however, a religious identity (identification with Islam). Under these circumstances, the religious identity may interact to qualify or shape the effects of glorification on collective action to support Rohingya refugees.

Specifically, former Prime Minister Najib's statement at the beginning of the current work suggests that Muslim identity in Malaysia is key in supporting the Rohingya refugees. Accordingly, we hypothesize that Muslim identification will override the impact of the commonly found association between glorification and exclusion of ethnic minority out-group members. What could be a plausible mechanism that explains how glorification of Malaysia could enhance (rather than reduce) collective action to support the Rohingya refugees? One possibility is that the meaning of glorification is re-constructed when it aligns with religious identity (e.g., Berndsen, Thomas, et al., 2017; Berndsen, Tiggemann, & Chapman, 2017). Glorification refers to two aspects. One is the reference to intolerance towards ethnic minority groups and the other aspect of glorification is associated with pride of the country (Roccas et al., 2006). Focusing primarily on the latter, those who glorify Malaysia perceive their country as the best to live in (e.g., "relative to other nations, [country name] is a very moral nation" and "other nations can learn a lot from us" (Roccas et al., 2006)). Such glorification in conjunction with a common religious identity (Islam), may bolster the idea that those with a shared religious identity should be allowed to live in the best country (Malaysia), hence welcoming and engaging in collective action that supports their "Muslim brothers and sisters" (i.e., Rohingya refugees).

Thus, we expect that the more Malaysians identify in a glorifying way with their country, the more they will be committed to engage in collective action that supports the Rohingya refugees. Importantly, this effect of glorification will only occur when Malaysians identify with Islam. Malaysian people for whom Muslim identity is not a defining aspect of how they see themselves, may be less inclined to offer supportive collective action for the Rohingya refugees, irrespective of the level of glorification. In short, the expected findings reflect an interaction between religious identity and national identity in Malaysia.

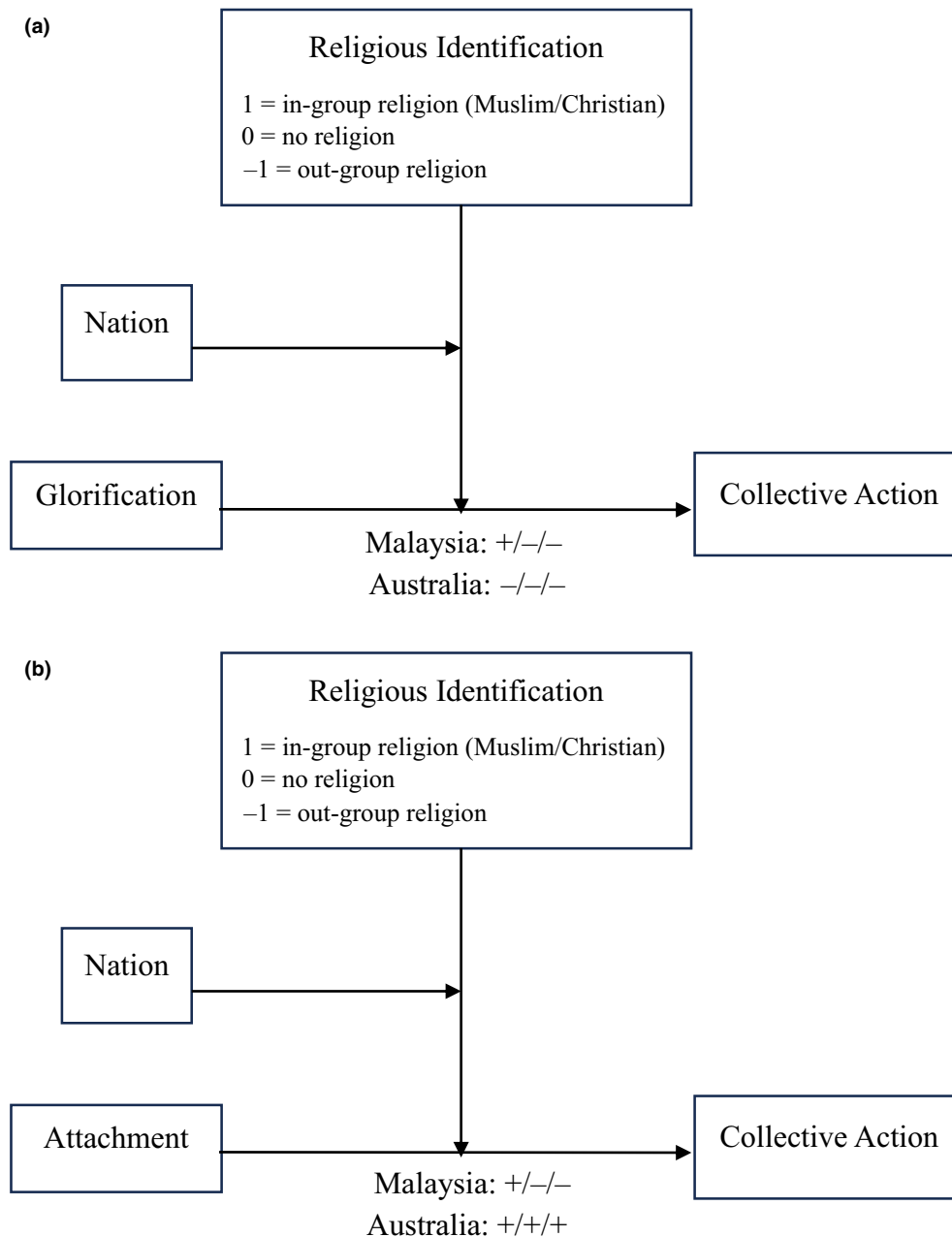
Support for this interaction hypothesis would then demonstrate that glorification is not necessarily associated with a prejudiced attitude towards ethnic minority groups, but that such an attitude is context dependent, and indeed dependent upon the other self-aspects (identity) that are held in that situation. In line with this, Berndsen et al. (2018) have shown that the relationship between a glorifying identification and prejudiced attitude towards asylum seekers is driven by perceiving the targets of prejudice as a realistic threat to one's interests. However, Rohingya refugees are not perceived as

a threat in the Malaysian context, because of the same religious identity.

3 | THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Our research extends research about the interplay between national and religious identification (e.g., Verkuyten et al., 2014; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012; Wibisono et al., 2019) in the context of collective action in three ways. First, we employ a multidimensional concept of national identification. Second, we investigate cross-national differences and similarities between Australia and Malaysia in national and religious identity as well as the combination of these identities on collective action intentions. Third, we will show that a potential conflicting identity (i.e., glorification) can be modified, resulting in commitment to collective action which supports individuals who are usually treated in a prejudicial way by those who glorify their nation. The three novel aspects of our research are addressed in the hypotheses below.

As glorification in WEIRD societies is associated with prejudice against and exclusion of ethnic minority groups (e.g., Berndsen et al., 2018; Berndsen & Gausel, 2015, 2019; Berndsen, Thomas, et al., 2017; Berndsen, Tiggemann, & Chapman, 2017; Leidner et al., 2010; Roccas et al., 2006), we hypothesize that in Australia, glorification would be associated with less willingness to engage in collective action that supports the Rohingya refugees (see Figure 1a). Conversely, when glorification is controlled for, attachment in WEIRD societies would be related to an inclusive commitment to (disadvantaged) group members who are harmed by the in-group (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006). That is, those who identify in an attached way with Australia would be critical about the government's policies to detain Rohingya refugees to horrifying offshore detention centres. Accordingly, people relatively higher in attachment would be motivated to support Rohingya refugees as depicted in Figure 1b (see also Berndsen & Gausel, 2015, 2019). Thus, we hypothesize a positive link between attachment to Australia and willingness to engage in actions that support the Rohingya refugees and a negative link between glorification and willingness to support the Rohingya refugees. In Australia, religious identification is not expected to impact on the link between glorification and collective action intention (see Figure 1a) and neither on the link between attachment and collective action intention (see Figure 1b). We argue that this is because Christian identification does not imply commitment to support the Rohingya refugees in the way that Islam would in Malaysia (see Powell et al., 2011). That is, in the Australian context, the religious identity would not interact with the national identity because a Christian identity is not a shared identity between Australians and Rohingya refugees. Taken together, we predicted a *negative* relationship between glorification



of Australia and commitment to collective action and a *positive* relationship between attachment to Australia and commitment to collective action, irrespective of religious identification.

We hypothesize that Malays, however, share a religious identity (Islam) with the Rohingya refugees, which would qualify the exclusionary behaviour associated with glorification into supportive collective action for Rohingya refugees, but only when Malaysian people identify with Islam (see [Figure 1a](#)). As far as we are aware, our research is the first to show that seemingly

conflicting identities (glorification versus religious identity) can be unified because of the strong influence of religious identification on glorification. Further, we hypothesize that national attachment to Malaysia and identification with Islam are both identities (i.e., compatible identities) that would promote Malays' willingness to collectively support the Rohingya refugees because both identities involve an inclusive attitude towards Rohingya refugees (see [Figure 1b](#)).

In addition, we hypothesize that non-Muslim Malays (Chinese Malaysians and Indian Malaysians who

primarily identify with Buddhism and Hinduism, respectively) would be less willing to support the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia because Buddhist and Hindu identities differ from the Islam identity of the Rohingya refugees, irrespective of the level of glorification or attachment. Such religious intergroup bias is accompanied by exhibiting negative attitudes towards others who have a different religion (Johnson et al., 2010, 2012). Thus, our analysis recognizes the contrasting effects of sharing/not sharing religious identities in the context of other broad social categories (national identities), and in doing so, makes novel advances in the literature. Taken together, we predict a three-way interaction between religious identification, nationality, and each mode of national identification on collective action. In Australia, the negative relationship between glorification and commitment to collective actions, as well as the positive relationship between attachment and collective action, would occur regardless of religious identification. By contrast, in Malaysia, the positive relationship between glorification/attachment and commitment to collective action would be moderated by religious identification; the relationship occurs only when Malaysian people identify with Islam. Despite the similar outcome (i.e., supportive collective action intention) for attachment and glorification in the Malaysian context, we have outlined that the processes underlying the outcome differ to the extent that national and religious identities are already congruent (attachment) or become unified (glorification) based on shared Islam identity. Figure 1a,b display our conceptual model showing that the moderation of religion's effect on the relationship between the predictor (glorification or attachment) and collective action is moderated by nationality (i.e., moderated moderation).

Finally, it is worth noting that people in both nations engaged in protests supporting the Rohingya refugees. In Malaysia, there were numerous collective action events stemming from this religious identification – from protests against the Myanmar government and in solidarity with the Rohingya refugees in December 2016 (Kannan et al., 2016) and a massive street protest by the Rohingya refugees themselves in August 2017 that resulted in the detention of several protestors (Asyraf, 2017). In many of these protests, ethno-nationalist and religiously oriented political parties in Malaysia have weighed in, politicizing the issue, and argued for more to be done in support of Muslims around the world (Yunus & Shagar, 2016). Collective action to support the Rohingya refugees have also occurred in Australia (e.g., Muslim, 2017) as well as protest by the Rohingya themselves together with Australian human rights groups (Carmody, 2017). Many of such protests include calling on the Australian government to do more for the Rohingya refugees (Carmody, 2017; Fewster, 2017). Despite these protests in both countries, it is likely that Malaysian participants will have more knowledge about the Rohingya refugees than Australian participants.

Malaysia has accepted many Rohingya refugees who were visible in daily life. In contrast, Australia has less

contact with Rohingya refugees because they were detained in offshore detention centres. The difference in exposure to Rohingya refugees may result in more knowledge about the Rohingya refugees which can affect stronger willingness to engage in supportive collective action by Malaysian participants compared with Australian participants. As such, we control for reported knowledge about the Rohingya refugees in our analyses.

4 | METHOD

In September 2018, we took measures of religious identification, national identification, and commitment to collective action regarding the plight of Rohingya refugees in both Australia and Malaysia. Data collection occurred approximately 4 months after a new government had formed in Malaysia. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics and Biosafety committee in Australia.

4.1 | Participants

A total of 707 participants comprising Australian ($n=407$) and Malaysian ($n=300$) citizens participated in the survey. Participants were excluded based on a priori exclusion criteria. Specifically, we excluded participants who had more than 10% missing data on the key variables ($n=8$); did not provide their age (we could not be sure they were over the age of 18; $n=4$); completed the survey in less than 300s whereas the median completion time was 616.50s ($n=19$); did not successfully complete the attention checks ($n=14$); or reported that they had lived less than 15 years in the nation ($n=4$; to ensure that national identification was sufficiently meaningful). None of the exclusion criteria affected the Malaysian sample.

The final sample consisted of 658 participants (Australia $n=358$, Malaysia $n=300$). With this sample size, a regression analysis with three predictors and four covariates (see PROCESS model in Results section) would have a sensitivity of detecting an explained variance effect size of $f^2=0.03$ (Faul et al., 2007). Table S1 shows the demographic characteristics for the sample from each nation.

Data were collected online through professional recruitment organizations (Australia: Survey Sampling International, Malaysia: Vase.ai Market Research). In both countries, the organization assisted in selecting survey respondents who are representative for the population we were researching. The Malaysian research team requested respondents who are representative for the general Malaysian population at the time of data collection (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2022). The percentage of Malay-Muslims, Chinese Malaysians, and Indian Malaysians as well as percentage of female/male are indicated in Table S1. The Australian research team requested a sample which comprised an equal

percentage of male and female participants as well as percentages that reflect the cultural diversity in the Australian population.

4.2 | Stimulus materials and procedure

The questionnaire was completed by all participants in English. In Malaysia, English is taught as part of the national school curriculum and is widely used in both personal and professional communication. Participants accessed the questionnaire by clicking an electronic link. Participants first responded to demographic items. They then read some brief information about the Rohingya people; the Rohingya refugees were forced to flee from Myanmar because of ongoing violence and persecution. Specifically, the ongoing military violence against the Rohingya people in Myanmar has forced more than 600,000 Rohingya to flee. To make the context relevant to participants, they were told that only international pressure by countries like Australia/Malaysia can effectively end the persecution of the Rohingya people. After reading the article, participants responded to items involving their knowledge about the Rohingya refugees, national identification, and commitment to collective action. All questions were measured on Likert-type scales with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated. Finally, participants indicated their religion, strength of religious identification, and their political preference. The latter is presented in [Table S1](#).

4.3 | Dependent measures

4.3.1 | Knowledge about Rohingya refugees

Participants responded to the following questions anchored at 1 (*not at all familiar*) and 7 (*very familiar*): “how familiar are you with news or reports about how the Australian/Malaysian government has responded to the Rohingya refugee situation?” and “how familiar are you with news or reports about the Rohingya refugee situation?” The correlation between the items was significant in Australia, $r=0.81$, $p<0.001$, and in Malaysia, $r=0.81$, $p<0.001$.

4.3.2 | Mode of national identification

Glorification and attachment were each measured with five items adapted from Roccas et al. (2006). The five glorification items we used were: Relative to other nations, Australia [Malaysia] is a very moral nation; Australia [Malaysia] is better than other nations in all respects; Other nations can learn a lot from us; There is generally a good reason for every rule and regulation made by our national authorities; It is disloyal for Australians

[Malaysians] to criticize Australia [Malaysia]. The five attachment items were: I identify as an Australian [a Malaysian]; I am strongly committed to Australia [Malaysia]; It is important to me to view myself as an Australian [a Malaysian]; It is important to me that everyone will see me as an Australian [a Malaysian]; Being an Australian [a Malaysian] is an important part of my identity. The two sets of items were aggregated to form two scales of glorification and attachment. Glorification was internally consistent in Australia ($\alpha=0.84$) and Malaysia ($\alpha=0.86$), and attachment was also internally consistent in Australia ($\alpha=0.92$) and Malaysia ($\alpha=0.91$).

Note that the original Roccas et al. (2006) scale had a longer (eight items) measure. We removed some item/s because of relevance to the different countries (e.g., we removed the item about the military because Australians and Malays do not have conscription), redundancy within the items (i.e., items that were similar to other items) or face-valid overlaps with other constructs (e.g., attachment items that also seem to reflect a level of glorification).

4.3.3 | Religious commitment and identification

Participants indicated which religion they are committed to. Given that the specific religious affiliation was expected to be different across the two samples, participants were presented with a list of religions that are well-known in both nations. At the end of the list was an option “other religion”, and participants were asked to indicate the religion. The distribution of responses for various religions is presented in [Table S1](#).

We then created an index that reflects the religious categorization of the perceiver (that is, whether the religious affiliation is an in-group or out-group) as well as the strength of that religious affiliation (degree of identification). For each sample, we created three variables for religious identity; in-group religious identity which was coded as 1, out-group religious identity coded as -1 , and no-religious identity coded as 0. In-group (majority) religious identity in the Malaysian sample referred to Islam (65.7%) and in the Australian sample to Christianity (55.9%). Out-group religious identity referred to all other religions (Malaysia 32.3%; Australia 7.3%), no-religious identity comprised 2% in Malaysia and 36.9% in Australia (see [Table S1](#)).

Next, participants indicated the extent to which they identified as religious (general) on a Likert scale with 1 (*not at all religious*) and 7 (*very religious*). The effect codes for religious identity (see above) were multiplied with the continuous religious identification measure to create an index reflecting the type of religious identity and the intensity of commitment to it (i.e., identification). These are referred to as religious in-group identification, no-religious identification, and religious out-group identification.

4.3.4 | Commitment to collective actions

We adapted eight items from Thomas and McGarty (2018) that measured commitment to collective action. Example items were: “I intend to volunteer my time to support Rohingya refugees”, and “I intend to send a letter to the Australian [Malaysian] Government asking for greater support for Rohingya people”. The scales were reliable, $\alpha=0.94$ (Australian sample), $\alpha=0.96$ (Malaysian sample).

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Preliminary analyses

Table 1 displays the means and correlations for key variables in the two national samples. Table 1 provides preliminary support for the hypotheses; glorification, attachment, and commitment to take collective action in the Malaysian sample were significantly correlated with religious in-group identification, but not in the Australian sample. Also consistent with our predictions, glorification in the Australian sample was negatively correlated with commitment to collective action. Contrary to the predictions, however, attachment was also negatively correlated with commitment to collective action. However, the zero-order correlations do not control for the other facet of national identification. Further, glorification was significantly higher in the Malaysian sample than in the Australian sample, whereas the samples did not significantly differ in level of attachment. Finally, Table 1 presents that knowledge about the Rohingya refugees was significantly higher in the Malaysian sample compared with Australian sample. However, the correlation between knowledge and the key variable commitment to collective action did not significantly differ between the samples, $z=0.42$, $p=0.338$.

Before conducting the full comparison of the role of national identification and religious identification in explaining collective actions across nations, we first conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to assess whether the items loaded on the relevant factors without cross-loadings. The results of EFA are presented in the Data S1 and provide support for the two distinct constructs of national identification. Second, we sought to establish measurement equivalence of national identification (attachment and glorification) across the nations to ensure that the two types of national identifications have the same meanings across the samples (an important precondition for cross-cultural comparisons; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). The full reporting of the measurement invariance testing is appended in the Data S1. The tests identified full configural invariance (equivalence of factorial structure across the nations), full metric invariance (equivalence of item loadings across the nations) as well as full scalar invariance (equivalence of item intercepts across the nations). Accordingly, the

TABLE 1 Correlations between key variables of interest and descriptive statistics.

	Australia	Knowledge of Rohingyas	Glorification	Attachment	Collective action	Religious in-group identification	Religious out-group identification	No-religious identification	Malaysia
Knowledge of Rohingyas	2.97 ^a (1.75)		0.25***	0.32***	0.34***	0.22**	0.22**	0.61 ^{ns}	4.59 ^a (1.49)
Glorification	4.73 ^b (1.17)	-0.02 ^{ns}		0.66***	0.35***	0.15*	0.07 ^{ns}	0.25 ^{ns}	5.13 ^b (1.15)
Attachment	5.87 (1.11)	-0.04 ^{ns}	0.65***		0.37***	0.18*	0.10 ^{ns}	-0.54 ^{ns}	5.82 (1.12)
Collective action	3.30 ^c (1.29)	0.28***	-0.21***	-0.19***		0.32***	0.14 ^{ns}	0.04 ^{ns}	4.70 ^c (1.33)
Religious in-group identification	4.27 ^d (1.52)	0.15*	0.05 ^{ns}	0.00 ^{ns}	0.07 ^{ns}				5.38 ^d (1.01)
Religious out-group identification	4.10 ^e (1.45)	0.36 ^{ns}	0.09 ^{ns}	0.21 ^{ns}	0.10 ^{ns}	g			4.45 ^e (1.15)
No-religious identification	1.48 ^f (0.92)	0.12 ^{ns}	0.12 ^{ns}	-0.07 ^{ns}	0.17 ^{ns}	g	g		3.33 ^f (1.51)

Note: Data for the Australian sample are shown beneath the diagonal and for the Malaysian sample above the diagonal. ^a $t(656)=12.62$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=1.37, 1.87. ^b $t(656)=4.37$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.291, 0.577. ^c $t(656)=13.13$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=1.18, 1.59. ^d $t(396)=8.54$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.852, 1.36. ^e $t(116)=1.23$, $p=0.221$, 95% CI=-0.218, 0.935. ^f $t(138)=4.72$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=1.08, 2.63. g. Correlation cannot be computed. * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

constructs of attachment and glorification have similar psychological meanings across the two samples.

5.2 | Differences in collective mobilization between the two nations

As the construct validity of attachment and glorification was cross-nationally established, we used PROCESS version 3.4 and Model 3 (Hayes, 2019) to test the conceptual models (Figure 1a,b). National identification, religious identification with in-group/out-group/no identification were centred. We included two covariates: knowledge about the Rohingya refugees and the other facet of national identification. The latter is important because the positive link between attachment and glorification (i.e., both constructs measure national identification, Roccas et al., 2006) implies that one facet of national identification (for instance, glorification) can suppress the relationship between the other facet of national identification (attachment) and the variable of interest. Religious identification was the primary moderator and nationality was the secondary moderator.

Table 2A shows the regression coefficients for the moderated moderation model and glorification. The predicted 3-way interaction was significant. Figure 2 displays the interaction effects. Consistent with hypotheses, the stronger the glorification of Malaysia, the greater willingness to engage in collective action to support the Rohingya refugees, $b=0.35$, $p<0.001$, and this effect emerged only among people who reported religious in-group identification (Islam). Although the effect was significant for respondents with no-religion ($b=0.29$, $p<0.001$), this involved responses from only six participants. The effect for religious out-group identification was non-significant, $b=0.07$, $p=0.486$. As hypothesized, opposite findings were found in the Australian sample: the stronger the glorification of Australia, the weaker was commitment to

collective action. As expected, this effect occurred among those who identified with in-group religion (Christianity), $b=-0.36$, $p<0.001$, as well as among those without a religion, $b=-0.32$, $p<0.001$. However, the effect of glorification on collective action was non-significant for those who identified with out-group religion, $b=-0.20$, $p=0.077$, but the sample size was small ($n=21$).

Table 2B shows the regression coefficients for the moderated moderation model and attachment. The predicted three-way interaction was significant. Figure 3 shows the interaction effect. In line with hypotheses, the stronger the attachment to Malaysia, the greater was commitment to collective action and this effect occurred only when one identified with in-group religion (Islam), $b=0.46$, $p<0.001$. Again, the effect was significant for those with no-religion, $b=0.40$, $p<0.001$, but there were only six participants. The effect for religious out-group identification was non-significant, $b=0.17$, $p=0.069$. In contrast to the hypotheses, opposite findings were found in the Australian sample: the stronger the attachment to Australia, the weaker was commitment to collective action. This effect was significant for those who identified with in-group religion (Christianity), $b=-0.33$, $p=0.005$, and for those who reported no-religious identification, $b=-0.26$, $p=0.002$. For those who identified with out-group religion, the effect of attachment on collective action intention was non-significant, $b=-0.03$, $p=0.80$. Thus, unexpectedly, in the context of attached identification to Australia and religious in-group identification as well as having no-religion, the combination appeared to undermine support for refugees.

6 | DISCUSSION

We live in a world of increasing interdependence (Reese et al., 2019), where the disadvantages of one group are frequently addressed via the action of many people spanning

TABLE 2A Unstandardized regression weights for the moderated moderation model with glorification predicting commitment to collective action.

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Glorification	-0.023	0.053	-0.127	0.082	0.672
Religious id. ^a	0.044	0.014	0.016	0.072	0.002**
Nation ^b	1.04	0.109	0.828	1.25	<0.001***
Glorification * Religious id. ^a	0.006	0.012	-0.018	0.029	0.650
Religious id. ^a * Nation ^b	0.071	0.028	0.017	0.125	0.010*
Glorification * Nation ^b	0.514	0.083	0.351	0.678	<0.001***
Glorification * Religious id. ^a * Nation ^b	0.049	0.023	0.003	0.094	0.038*

Abbreviation: id., identification.

^aReligious identification: 1=in-group (Christianity/Islam), 0=no-religion, -1=out-group religion.

^bNation: 1=Australia, 2=Malaysia.

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

several countries. The main purpose of this study was to consider possible differences that may influence how collective actions emerge and manifest across different nations. We conceptualized the effects of nationality in terms of differences in religious identification and national identification.

In most studies on collective action, identification is treated as a unidimensional concept (Van Zomeren et al., 2008) and its effects have been little studied across nations (but see Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021). Two key points of novelty are that we adopted a multidimensional concept of social identification (involving isolating the

effects of glorification and attachment) and compared these effects in two different national contexts. We hypothesized that aspects of a multidimensional national identity and commitment to collective action would be shaped by religion and nationality. Accordingly, we tested whether the relationship between national identification and collective action would be moderated by religious in-group identification, and whether the effect of religious in-group identification would be moderated by nationality.

The moderated moderation model was supported for Malaysia suggesting that when Malaysian people identify with the in-group religion, both glorification of and attachment to Malaysia predicted commitment to collective action to support Rohingya refugees. The moderation model was supported in Australia, although collective support for the Rohingya refugees was in the *opposite* direction to what we had expected for people who are attached to Australia. As hypothesized, we found that glorification of Australia predicted less willingness to engage in collective action to support Rohingya refugees. The reverse relationship was expected for attachment, but we found that attachment to Australia predicted reluctance to support Rohingya refugees. Consistent with hypotheses, the findings for national identification with Australia occurred regardless of religious identity.

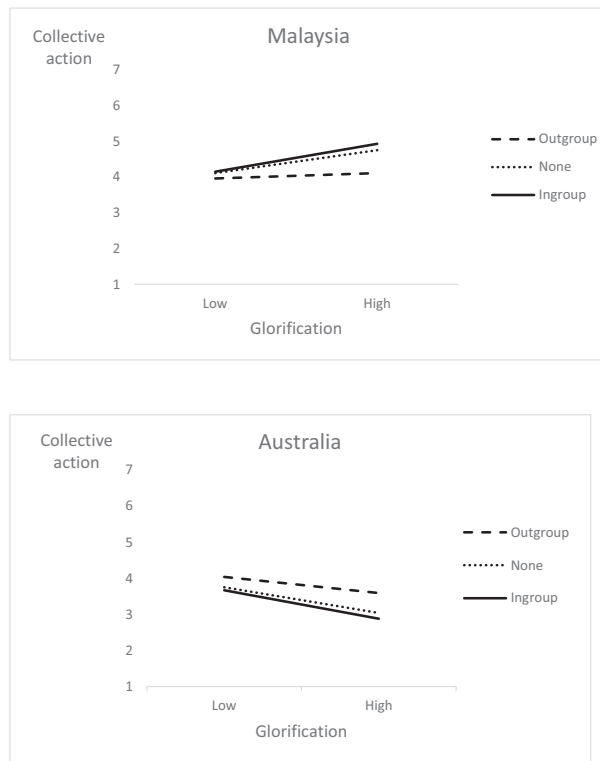


FIGURE 2 Three-way interaction between nation, glorification, and religious identification on collective action commitment.

TABLE 2B Unstandardized regression weights for the moderated moderation model with attachment predicting commitment to collective action.

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Attachment	0.038	0.056	-0.072	0.148	0.496
Religious id. ^a	0.049	0.014	0.021	0.077	0.001**
Nation ^b	1.08	0.109	0.868	1.30	<0.001***
Attachment * Religious id. ^a	0.003	0.013	-0.023	0.029	0.831
Religious id. ^a * Nation ^b	0.081	0.027	0.027	0.134	0.003**
Attachment * Nation ^b	0.545	0.088	0.372	0.717	<0.001***
Attachment * Religious id. ^a * Nation ^b	0.055	0.025	0.006	0.105	0.030*

Abbreviation: id., identification.

^aReligious identification: 1 = in-group (Christianity/Islam), 0 = no-religion, -1 = out-group religion.

^bNation: 1 = Australia, 2 = Malaysia.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

6.1 | The interplay of religious and national identification, and nationality in promoting versus attenuating commitment to action

6.1.1 | Glorification

We reasoned that glorification and religious in-group identification might be incongruent concepts in the Malaysian context because glorification is associated with superiority and intolerance towards ethnic minority groups in WEIRD countries. Malay people and the Rohingya refugees, however, share the same religion – Islam. As religious

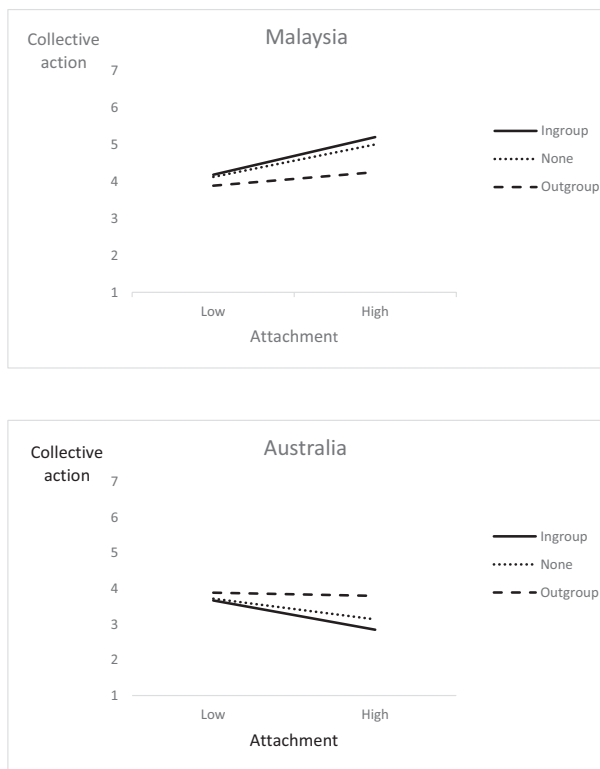


FIGURE 3 Three-way interaction between nation, attachment, and religious identification on collective action commitment.

identification can shape other social categorical processes (e.g., Ysseldyk et al., 2010), we hypothesized that religious in-group identification would modify the negative impact of glorification on commitment to take action to support Rohingya refugees. As a possible explanation for this change, we reasoned that the meaning of glorification could be re-constructed by focusing primarily on love for the country (Malaysia), including its religious aspects, rather than prejudice against a specific ethnic group. Indeed, religious in-group identification was found to moderate the positive relationship between glorification and intention to collectively support the Rohingya refugees, whereas the relationship was not significant for religious out-group identification. Importantly, we have demonstrated that glorification of one's country is not always associated with intolerance towards minority groups as is often found in WEIRD societies. Rather, in a particular context (here, in Malaysia and the context of strong Islamic identification), glorification can be reversed to result in more inclusive behaviours towards ethnic minority groups.

In the Australian context, we expected that religious identification would not affect the relationship between national identification and supportive action. Indeed, glorification was not differently affected by religious identification. Those who glorified Australia and identified with the religious in-group or no-religion, predicted less willingness to engage in actions that support the Rohingya refugees. The negative relationship between glorification

and supportive action is consistent with previous research (Berndsen et al., 2018; Berndsen & Gausel, 2015, 2019; Berndsen, Thomas, et al., 2017; Berndsen, Tiggemann, & Chapman, 2017; Leidner et al., 2010; Roccas et al., 2006).

6.1.2 | Attachment

We argued that religious in-group identification and attachment to Malaysia are compatible concepts as both involve an inclusive attitude towards Rohingya refugees. Consistent with hypotheses, religious in-group identification moderated the positive relationship between attachment and willingness to collectively support the Rohingya refugees. This relationship was not significant for religious out-group identification. These findings are consistent with evidence suggesting that people are more likely to help people with whom they share a social categorical relationship (e.g., Neville et al., 2022).

However, our hypothesis for attachment and commitment to actions that aid the Rohingya refugees was not supported in the Australian context. We expected attachment to Australia to predict willingness to engage in actions that support the Rohingya refugees, irrespective of religion. However, we found that individuals who reported an attached identity were *less* willing to engage in supportive action for the Rohingya refugees. This finding was not differently affected by religious identification; those who identified with in-group religion or no-religion both showed a negative link between attachment and supportive action. A plausible explanation for the negative link is that the Christian identity, or no-religious identity did not translate to intention to support the Muslim Rohingya people because they are double out-group members for both forms of identification considered here. Moreover, there is no shared superordinate category. However, this idea does not explain why the relationship with supportive action intention was significantly negative instead of a non-significant finding. Another explanation is that religious faith and identification with a religion often promotes more in-group, rather than out-group altruism – what some have termed altruistic hypocrisy (Ji et al., 2006; Tremblay-Boire & Prakash, 2019). It is also possible that many people in Western countries perceive Islam as a basis of terror and threat (Aydin & Hammer, 2010; Johnson et al., 2010, 2012) and this is also the case in Australia (Iner, 2017; Koziol, 2017). Accordingly, there is a need to explore whether the content of attached identity differs depending on the context. This would be a fruitful avenue for future research.

6.2 | Implications, limitations and suggestions for future research

The current analysis shows that national and religious identification can bolster or hinder willingness to collectively

support victims of humanitarian disaster which is dependent on whether the religious categories include a perceived out-group or not. One implication of the current study is that when building campaigns to support victims of humanitarian emergency, one should consider national identification and religious identification as well as the (in) congruence between potentially relevant identities.

A limitation of the present study is that the two nations differed in familiarity of Rohingya refugees and of the refugee crisis. Such differences can occur in complex “real world” cross-national comparisons and cannot be easily remediated. Yet, citizens of far-away countries donate to humanitarian crises all the time, and as such, it is nevertheless important to understand the processes that promote support even in less engaged countries (perhaps, especially in more disengaged countries). Further, the relationship between knowledge and commitment to collective action was of a similar magnitude in Malaysia and Australia, and in both countries, protests occurred in support of the Rohingya refugees.

Another limitation is that two sub-samples that were too small to derive reliable conclusions from (i.e., no-religious identification in the Malaysian sample ($n=6$) and religious out-group identification in the Australian sample ($n=21$)). An additional limitation involves our focus on religious and national identification as factors directly relevant to mobilize support for victims of humanitarian disaster across nations. However, we do not know whether other aspects of the organization of social and political relations could explain the current findings. For instance, cultural dimensions and values, such as collectivism, hierarchy, and egalitarianism (Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021) may also play a role. Hence, a direction for future research involves cultural differences between countries as a basis for understanding cross-cultural solidarity to support victims of humanitarian emergency. Moreover, such future research may employ the full SIMCA (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), that is, incorporating how the effects of multiple identities on collective action are mediated by efficacy and perceived injustice. Also, future research may employ different items for religious identification. It is then possible to conduct measurement invariance on all three constructs because religious identification and (glorifying and attached) national identification are related identities.

A further limitation is that we studied only two nations. Including more non-WEIRD samples may provide more insights into differences and similarities between nations in mobilizing support for victims of humanitarian emergency. Finally, in contrast to Kanas and Martinovic (2017), we found comparable ratings of glorification and religious in-group identification in Malaysia. However, we do not identify the mechanisms via which the glorifying identity becomes compatible with religious in-group identification in the Malaysian

context (see Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021). We suggested that glorification may have a different meaning when it sits alongside a religious in-group identity. Other possibilities are that the impact of glorification on excluding out-groups is ignored. Or that religious in-group identification suggests an exception for disadvantaged out-group members with the same religion. Each of these questions are potential avenues for future research.

7 | CONCLUSION

The current research contributes to the handful of studies examining cross-national differences in collective actions to support victims of humanitarian crises and the processes underlying them. As points of novelty, we test the interaction between multidimensional national identity and religious identification on collective action intention in both a WEIRD (Australian) sample and a non-WEIRD (Malaysian) sample. Our findings challenge the commonly held views about glorification and attachment.

There are people engaging in collective action to support victims of humanitarian emergency all over the world. Are these people psychologically the same, operating in the context of a shared, uniform set of psychological attributes, or are they different, reflecting national nuances? We showed that people are both the same and different: they are acting in terms of common group memberships, but aspects of the nation and the religious context affect how the suffering of other groups is experienced and confronted.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mariette Berndsen: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; methodology; project administration; validation; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Emma F. Thomas:** Conceptualization; methodology; validation; writing – review and editing. **Eugene Y. J. Tee:** Conceptualization; methodology; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Dr Eugene Tee is an Editorial Board Member of Asian Journal of Social Psychology.

OPEN RESEARCH BADGES



This article has earned Open Data and Open Materials badges. Data, materials and analysis plan are available

at https://osf.io/856r7/?view_only=01503ec82f374e209ab73905edabc686.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data will be made publicly available when the manuscript will be accepted. All materials and data are available at https://osf.io/856r7/?view_only=01503ec82f374e209ab73905edabc686.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics approval was obtained from Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7888) and the Ethics Review Board, Department of Psychology and the Ethics Review Board at the ELM Graduate School, both at HELP University. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

PREREGISTRATION STATEMENT

The study was not preregistered.

RESEARCH MATERIALS AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data archiving, sharing and availability statement: All materials and data are available at https://osf.io/856r7/?view_only=01503ec82f374e209ab73905edabc686.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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