GOOD CHARACTER DESERVES RESPECT AND MUST BE THE HERO!
HOW CHINESE WOMEN IN INDONESIA PERCEIVE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN AND JESUS IN MARK 7.24-30

Andreas Hauw[1*] and Betty Tjipta Sari[2]

[1] *South East Asia Bible Seminary (STT SAAT), Jl. Bukit Hermon No. 1, Tidar Atas, Malang, 65151, Indonesia*
[2] *Foundation Academy of Amsterdam, Bijlmerdreef 1289, 1103 TV, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Abstract

This study focuses on the correlation between three psychological variables and how Chinese women in Indonesia perceive Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7.24-30 (N = 230, M age = 41.70). The three psychological variables are perceived discrimination, ethnic identity, and well-being. The study evaluates (1) how the three variables relate to positive perceptions on Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman, and (2) how the positive perceptions of the characters in the story relates to perceiving who is the hero in the story. The results show that; (1) perceived discrimination relates negatively to well-being, (2) ethnic identity relates positively to well-being, (3) well-being relates positively to the positive perception on the characters of the story, (4) well-being mediates the relation between ethnic identity and perceived discrimination with the positive perception on the characters of the story, and (5) the positive perception on Jesus's character relates to perceiving Jesus as the hero of the story. The stronger the well-being and ethnic identity, the more positive the women perceive Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman.

Keywords: discrimination, ethnic identity, well-being, Bible, interpretation

1. Introduction

This study focuses on women from the Chinese minority group in Indonesia. It studies how their ethnic identity and the discrimination they perceive relate to their well-being. It also discusses how these three psychological variables (discrimination, ethnic identity and well-being) relate to how they perceive Jesus and the foreign woman in the story in Mark 7.24-30 in

---

*E-mail: andreas.hauw@seabs.ac.id, tel.: +62-341-559400, fax: +62-341-559402

the Bible. This pericope of the story of the Syrophoenician woman is in the context of a debate about the Jewish tradition of clean and unclean (Mark 7.1-23). In this account, the Syrophoenician woman is seen unclean and marginal by the Jewish. Therefore, women from a marginalized group such as the Chinese women in Indonesia who perceive discrimination may relate themselves more easily to an important character in the story, the Syrophoenician woman.

Women from the minority group, such as the Chinese, a migrant descendant group in Indonesia, may face oppression because of their racial/ethnic minority status and because they are female [1]. They may also perceive the discrimination that they experience as intertwined factors of their ethnicity and sex [1, 2]. Women from a minority ethnic group may go through incidents of discrimination arising both from their race and sex and not independently of one another. Perceived discrimination may lead to low happiness and mental health problems [3, 4] and past experience related to discrimination may make people more likely to appraise a new situation as a potential threat and can be harmful [5]. Therefore, perceived discrimination relates negatively to well-being.

There are, however, protective factors that may reduce maladjustment and psychopathology and may promote psychological, emotional and behavioural competence and well-being. For example, a study in Canada among middle-aged Southeast Asian refugees showed that a combination of ethnic identity and forbearance coping moderated the negative psychological consequences of discrimination [6]. A strong ethnic group identification relates to fewer depressive symptoms. Moreover, a sense of ethnic pride, involvement in ethnic practices and cultural commitment to one's racial/ethnic group may protect mental health, such as found among the Filipino Americans [7]. Therefore, ethnic identity relates positively to well-being [8]. This ethnic identity is a self-concept, which relates to an ethnic group identification derived from the awareness and knowledge of ethnic membership that includes emotions, behaviours and values attached to ethnic group membership [8-10].

For those who come from ethnic groups with lower status and power, such as the Chinese group in Indonesia, it is important to learn about their ethnicity. The process of learning their ethnicity can lead to constructive actions aimed at affirming the value and legitimacy of their group [11, 12]. This process can be done, but not all people can achieve strong ethnic identity, because this depends on how an individual experiences socialization within the family, the ethnic community and the larger setting [13]. An individual would think, feel and act in different social contexts based on his/her personal, family, ethnic group, or national "level of self" [12]. An individual has not only one 'personal self', but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership [12]. In the multilinguistic and multicultural context of Indonesia, there are national and ethnic identity. National identity refers to one's feelings of commitment and belonging to the country [14] and ethnic identity refers to "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behaviour due to group membership" [15]. However,

national identity is a more complex construct than is conveyed by a label because it involves feelings of belonging to and attitudes towards the larger society [8, 14].

According to the two-dimensional model of acculturation, ethnic identity may vary [9, 16, 17], that ethnic identity (such as being a 'Chinese Indonesian') and identity as a member of one's new society ('national' identity) are two dimensions of group identity which vary independently. However, a study in Indonesia has shown that national identity and ethnic identity are strongly correlated with each other across diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia [8]. When a person can integrate those multiple identities, he/she would have a higher level of overall well-being [13]. A strong ethnic identity is related to psychological well-being among members of acculturating groups [18, 19]. It has been known that ethnic identity and well-being are strongly correlated, but how these psychological variables relate to a Bible text interpretation is much less known. A study in the United States of America among Asian, African and Latinos has shown that both cultural racism and ethnic identity relate to quality of life [20]. But to our knowledge, the relation between discrimination, ethnic identity and well-being with a text interpretation of the Bible is understudied, although some theologians discuss a lot of cultural differences in reading and understanding the Bible [21] or the influence of psychological preferences on preferred interpretations [22, 23].

2. The biblical text used in the study

2.1. The narrative plot, characterization and setting

Mark 7.24-30 contains a narrative in which plot, characterization and setting (spatial, temporal and social locations) present Jesus as the hero in the story. There are three events forming the plot of the story: a Syrophoenician woman meets Jesus who comes into the region of Tyre (v. 24), an exchange between the woman and Jesus (vv. 26-29), and the healing of her little daughter (v. 30). In all three events and setting, Jesus is at the centre of the story. It is His authority to exorcise the unclean spirit (v. 29), the real bearer of the conflict in the story (v. 26). The Syrophoenician woman asks and depends on Jesus for the healing of her little daughter. The woman's faith in Jesus, reflected in her willingness to side with the demoniac as a supplicant for his benefit, represents that of a true disciple (v. 29, cf. Mark 3.34-35).

The narrator presents Jesus as the protagonist and readers are expected to follow Jesus. The mercy of Jesus flows when He listens to the Syrophoenician woman and heals her little daughter. Jesus as a boundary-breaker is presented by the narrator to abolish the socio-religious barrier in the healing of the little daughter. As the Syrophoenician woman and the narrator accept Jesus' words, readers are invited to stand on the same stance as Jesus the hero of the story.

2.2. Interpreting the woman as the hero

As a new critical view, feminist hermeneutics defends the role of the woman (e.g. Fiorenza [24]). This 'hermeneutic suspicion' is based on some fundamental principles. First is the woman's consciousness. This is extremely important for feminist hermeneutics. This consciousness involves the uniqueness of the woman's experience, which is used to interpret Bible passages. The woman's experience advances the goal of this interpretation: to show, first, the equality between woman and man (equal discipleship), second, the woman's wholeness and third, the woman's experience. The narrative maintains that a woman is as perfect as a man. Because of this idea, feminist hermeneutics attempts to restore the wholeness of the woman. This kind of hermeneutics rejects the traditions of the Bible and their interpretations that humiliate and oppress the woman. Based on God's revelation, traditions of the Bible and their interpretations cannot degrade a woman. Regarding the woman's experience, one can assume that this contrasts with the traditional interpretation of a woman's identity. Feminist hermeneutics insists that the woman's experience must be considered as the basic criterion to understand a woman [25].

How does feminist hermeneutics work? It can be described as follows: texts that traditionally interpret woman as marginal and are against woman are chosen to be criticized. These texts are reinterpreted in order to find the comprehensive theological meaning that rejects patriarchalism and androcentrism. Questions such as how a woman lives, interacts with others and survives in a patriarchal society are significant. This ancient woman's experience is analysed to find principles that guide a modern woman in a patriarchal culture to survive. This is a general description of how feminist hermeneutics works.

One of the significant feminism scholars, Fiorenza, presents some important points in feminist hermeneutics [25]. Firstly, feminism critics must apply some form of suspicion on the authority of the Bible because there are texts talking about oppression, sexuality and hate, which are not clearly explained. The critics should honestly attempt not to hide the weaknesses of patriarchal ideology in biblical texts. Secondly, the critics should analyse and evaluate biblical texts. With this critical view, critics must reject an interpretation of biblical texts that confirm and legitimize patriarchal structure. Thirdly, the critics should distinguish the messages of the word of God or proclamation from interpretation. Biblical texts and tradition in the Bible that protect patriarchal oppression structure are rejected as the word of God. This kind of text must go through a careful selection process with intention of ignoring the patriarchal structure rights of the texts. In other words, only biblical texts that confirm equality of man and woman are acceptable. Fourthly, biblical texts and tradition in the Bible that support patriarchal oppressive structure should be changed because these texts and tradition remind women of their marginalized and oppressed experiences. Fifthly, the feminism critics understand that the interpretation of a biblical text consists of rites, namely the celebration

and actualization of texts for the contemporary era [25, 26]. Biblical texts, therefore, are to be retold from the feminist imagination. This is done to bring biblical interpretation to the right track that defends human wholeness. A critical study of biblical literature from different perspectives is necessary for the sake of accuracy. Noting these points, this study will apply Fiorenza's feminist hermeneutics in interpreting Mark 7.24-30.

2.3. Woman's experience

A summary of Mark 6.54-56 indicates that Mark 7 begins a new collection of stories on defilement, which consists of three accounts: defilement and tradition (vv. 1-13, 14-23), the healing of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman (vv. 24-30), and the healing of a deaf and mute man (vv. 31-37) [27]. In the first account, Jesus disregards the scribes' concept of defilement (7.14-23). Jesus' stance continues in the two following narratives because He both communicates with the Gentiles and heals them (vv. 24-30 and 31-37, cf. Acts 10.28, 11.3). In essence, Mark 7 is an account of a controversy (cf. Mark 2.1-3.6) [28].

In this controversial chapter, Mark 7.24-30 narrates and emphasizes the role of the mother in pleading with Jesus for the healing her daughter. The pericope assumes that Mark's readers already know Jesus' authority. Because of that, the woman approaches Jesus and falls down at His feet (7.25). She begs Jesus to heal her daughter (7.26) and pleads with Him (7.28) on behalf of her daughter. The pericope shows the experience of women who were marginalized in the Jewish patriarchal tradition. This particular woman's experience emerges out of the pain felt by her daughter. Her passionate caring for her family originates from her own womb. The woman's diminutive word *crumbs* (v. 28 NRSV), asking for Jesus' grace, is an irony. She insists on Jesus' grace even if she is rejected. The role of the mother who is pleading on behalf of her daughter (v. 30) is emphasized. A disgraced woman is presented as a faithful mother. Her love for her daughter is far more than her caring for her own self. She accepts an insulting word (*dogs*) from Jesus. Love is highlighted in the role of the Syrophoenician woman. More importantly, her love for her daughter motivates her to walk through a new experience in seeing Jesus.

The Syrophoenician woman meets Jesus in spite of the barriers of patriarchal tradition. It is clear that a patriarchal point of view is the backdrop of the meeting. The pericope describes the great need of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7.26) that impels her to see Jesus. In contrast with this great need, the dialogue between her and Jesus contains the derogatory word '*dogs*' (v. 28). Jesus shows disrespect to the woman. Scholars have tried to soften Jesus' offensive word. For example, they say that Jesus is talking to Himself rather than to the woman, Jesus' facial expression or tone of voice tips the woman off, or Jesus may have winked [28, p. 468], Jesus intends to test the woman for her claim to receive God's blessings [29]. Whatever interpretation of *dog* used by Jesus referring to the woman does not weaken its derogatory and racist meaning

[30]. Certainly, the derogatory word shows disrespect. An intense conversation takes place in the pericope and highlights the barrier that the Syrophoenician woman needs to face [27, p. 380-389].

As a Gentile woman, the Syrophoenician mother is rejected because of her triple-minority situation: gender, ethnicity and religion. The pericope shows she needs help from a man, a Jewish. The woman's brave act to talk with Jesus violates the Jewish traditional rules. Neither a Jewish woman nor a Gentile woman is allowed to converse with Jewish man she does not know personally in open public, more so if He is a rabbi as Jesus is publicly known. Related with this gender situation is the ethnic background and religious conviction of the woman. She is a Canaanite according to Matthew 15.22, of Syrophoenician origin. Based on the relationship between Canaan and Israel in ancient history, Moore maintains that the ethnic background and the religion of Canaan connote idolatry and abomination. More importantly, the Canaanites are targets of genocide [31]. This backdrop is sufficient to show a separation between Jesus, a Jewish, and the woman, a Syrophoenician. In addition, the pericope shows a motif that disgraces the woman's ethnicity and religious conviction. The diminutive word *children* (vv. 28, 30) used by Jesus in order to compare the ethnic tradition and belief of Israel against the woman is clearly an insulting word. The woman's situation of triple-minority does not prevent her insistence on her daughter's healing. She crosses the boundary of gender, ethnicity and religion for the sake of her daughter. She challenges the patriarchal point of view because she feels the pain of her daughter. The healing of her daughter is possible only by the removal of burdens created by patriarchal values.

The woman's experience of rejection is none other than the rejection of herself, her daughter and her people. Her humble plea, which is for her family, is received with harshness and the refusal of Jesus. The Jewish patriarchal values create severe hostility between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. But this *woman-dog*, representing the biblical-theological voice of the women who are excluded, repressed and marginalized, appears as the heroine in the story [24, p. 11-12]. She argues with Jesus and wins the debate.

The pericope (cf. Matthew's story) notes Jesus' words to embarrass her. This indicates that the woman is going through religious prejudice. Because of her gender, ethnicity and religion, the woman cannot take part in the feast of Jewish people. Significantly, the 'bread' has a theological meaning in the pericope as pointed by its context. The complete sentence of v. 27 reads as follows: "He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs'". Three important words in verse 27 are "bread" (food), "be fed" and "first". These words are reminiscent of the two miracles of feeding which are found before and after this passage (Mark 6.35-44, 52 especially v. 42 and 8.1-10 especially v. 8) [32]. The two feeding miracles show that the term "bread" is a metaphor for the blessings of the Messiah's ministry to the Israelites and Gentiles as symbolized by the feeding of 5,000 men (Mark 6.35-44, 52) and 4,000 men (Mark 8.1-10) respectively. These two miracles point to the divine sequence of salvation: first for the Israelites and then

for the Gentiles. This interpretation is congruent with the use of the word "first" in Jesus' reply to the woman. In this light, Jesus' priority in His ministry is highlighted *viz.* for the Israelites. The parallel account in Matthew 15.21-28 supports this interpretation. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes that Jesus' ministry is only to the lost sheep of Israel (15.24, 26). Furthermore, the apostolic teaching particularly Romans 1.16 ("to the Jew first and also to the Greek") indicates that the term "first" carries an eschatological and salvation-historical significance and points to the day that will come when the Gentiles will fully participate in the blessings of salvation [28, p. 463]. This understanding corresponds with Mark's Gospel that the Gentile nations should be first preached to before the end of time (Mark 13.10) [33]. Significantly, the bread is exclusively for the Jews and the woman is obviously excluded based on her race, religious stance, even from salvation at the end of time. Obviously, the Syrophoenician woman does not know the arduous theological interpretation as such. Significantly, however, the dialogue has also provided a reason for Jesus to eventually heal the woman's daughter. Furthermore, even the dialogue demonstrates that the salvation that Jesus delivers is extended to the Gentiles [32, p. 173]. The changing of Jesus' mind is caused by the words of the Syrophoenician woman. The pericope notes, "'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs'" (7.28). At the end of the day, the biblical-theological discussion in which the woman takes part results in the healing of her daughter and more importantly the acceptance of her gender, ethnicity and religious conviction by the people.

3. The Chinese Indonesian context

The Chinese Indonesian is a minority group. Consisting only of 1.2% (about three million) of the total population of Indonesia [BBC News, 26 October 2017]; they are found either in cities or rural areas in the archipelago. Physically, the Chinese are easily recognized through their skin or eyes, as typically seen in mongoloid races. This feature makes the Chinese different in appearance from the local Indonesian.

S.M. Lim has classified the Chinese Indonesian into two groups, *Peranakan* and *Totok* [34]. The *Peranakan* are a Chinese Indonesian community who have adopted the traditional culture of the local Indonesian. They speak Indonesian or local languages and get along with local Indonesians. This might have happened because the *Peranakan* had long stayed together with local Indonesians. Some *Peranakan* are third or fourth generation living in Indonesia. Thorough integration and assimilation are apparent now. On the contrary, the *Totok* are a rather new group Chinese Indonesians. This generation speak Chinese and strongly protect their Chinese ancestors' traditions. Mostly, the *Totok* are second or first generation of Chinese living in Indonesia [34]. The integration and assimilation of the *Totok* with local Indonesians are not as good as those of the *Peranakan*. What is important to note is that these two groups indicate the heterogeneousness of the Chinese Indonesians.

Other aspects of culture contribute much to the heterogeneousness of the Chinese Indonesians, such as religion, socio-economic and politics [35]. Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and traditional Chinese religions (Taoism and Confucianism) are the primary religions of the Chinese Indonesians. Only a small number of the Chinese Indonesians adhere to Islamism. However, these Chinese Moslems have an official organization for *dakwah* (spreading Islam) among the Chinese Indonesians (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia,* PITI). On the contrary, the Chinese Indonesians belonging to other religions have not formed their own organization. Mostly, they follow their own main religious organization together with non-Chinese people. This reflects that the Chinese Indonesians are not united in one specific religion, but religion makes them unite with others of Chinese descent as well as of people of non-Chinese descent.

Although, the Chinese Indonesians are known as traders, many of them are traditional workers (farmer, fisherman, teacher, etc.). Only a few of the Chinese Indonesians work as civil servants or are in military institutions because of race discrimination [36].

Different political views among the Chinese Indonesians have been known long before the independence of Indonesia and continued up to the fall of Soeharto's regime. Currently, only a few Chinese Indonesians are involved in a variety political organizations and work as government and military officials. It cannot be doubted then the Chinese Indonesians are not only a minority but are also heterogeneous.

Being a minority and being heterogeneous the Chinese Indonesians are vulnerable. Chinese Indonesians were murdered, and their properties were stolen or burned in Kudus (1918) due to economic rivalry, thus spreading religion conflict. According to Hartono, this is one of many other reasons that the Chinese Indonesians do not like to be adherents of Islam [37]. Discriminatory policies are applied to the Chinese Indonesians for political reasons. Citizenship, language, culture, education, economics are areas where the Chinese Indonesians are discriminated against [38]. They have been accused of placing their savings and investments abroad when the economy of Indonesia had a free fall in 1998 [39] were accused of 'betrayal' or called 'not nationalistic'.

More seriously affected are the Chinese Indonesian women. In any of the conflicts that involved the Chinese Indonesians, the Chinese women experienced much more suffering. For example, in one of the worst unrests - the so called 1998 May tragedy - the Chinese Indonesian women were raped in Jakarta and in many other places. This mass rape is a clear example of a gender-based violence in which the victims are only Chinese Indonesian women [40].

The vulnerability of the Chinese Indonesian women does not occur only because of an external power but also because of internal authority, such as tradition and culture. In a nuclear family, a Chinese woman is ruled by man (patriarchal system). This patriarchal family system causes a 'silent hardship' for the Chinese women. There is family-based violence that includes physical hardship, such as foot binding, killing and women trafficking [34, p. xvi; 41].

The past horrible experiences of the Chinese Indonesians, men and women alike, caused their identity crisis. In addition, present Western culture contributes to the identity crisis of the Chinese Indonesians [42]. Both powerful influences have crushed down their Chinese Indonesian identity. Currently the Chinese Indonesians are forever migrants. They are 'the other' in the history of Indonesia and are slowly changing to be a *hybrid* community. Lim has shown in her research that current the Chinese Indonesian women survive; they construct their identity in an open-ended style [34, p. 188].

The Chinese Indonesian women correspond with the Syrophoenician woman in Mark's story. Both are victims due to religion, socio-economic and politic repression. Sociologically, the Syrophoenician woman and Chinese Indonesian women are migrants. They belong to a marginal group where they live in. Both women are seen as rich people. The bed (*kline*, v. 30) of the Syrophoenician woman, is a 'luxury' bed owned by a rich family in the first century. The Chinese Indonesians are commonly seen as rich people, as well [34, p. 19]. The two women are seen, at the same time, marginal and wealthy, superiority as also inferiority.

The political dispute between the Jewish and the Syrophoenician in the first century created discrimination and suffering for both nations. In Mark's story the Syrophoenician woman is disparaged by Jesus. However, the Chinese Indonesian women were not only verbally abused but also sexually harassed. The mass rape in May 1998 was a vivid example of the political effect on the minority.

The similarities in the bad experiences of the Syrophoenician Woman and the Chinese Indonesian women expose the patterns of repression, rejection and oppression by majority. However, these two women managed to get by with their respective methods. They both get what they deserve and exert 'power' to accept their minority group. Therefore, the Chinese Indonesian women are suitable respondents to find out how the story of Syrophoenician woman is understood.

4. How psychological variables relate to the interpretation of a text

Some studies have shown that the reader may choose an interpretation of a Bible text that matches their psychological type preferences [22]. A study has also shown that the clarification of the Bible interpretation is also significant for therapeutic relationship in psychotherapy. That the therapist and client need to examine textual matters and reader issues such as language, culture and situational context, as well as personal and group presuppositions, expectations, history and experience [43]. However, not many studies investigate how psychological variables such as well-being and perceived discrimination may relate to Bible text interpretation, although many theologians have discussed about the relation between culture and Theology [21]. Therefore, we are interested in investigating how psychological variables (specifically ethnic

identity, perceived discrimination, and well-being) may relate to how people interpret a story in the Bible text.

5. The present study

This study will investigate how the perceived discrimination, ethnic identity and well-being of Chinese Christian women in Indonesia may relate to how they interpret the story of a migrant woman in the Bible found in Mark 7.24-30, especially on how they see who the hero is in the story and how they perceive the positive character and attitude of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman.

5.1. Research questions

From the literatures above, we draw some research questions:
1. Does ethnic identity relate positively to well-being?
2. Does perceived discrimination relate negatively to well-being?
3. Does ethnic identity relate to a positive interpretation on the characters in the text?
4. Does well-being relate to a positive interpretation on the characters of the text?
5. Does well-being mediate the relation between perceived discrimination and the interpretation of the text?
6. Is the positive interpretation of the characters of the story relate to choosing which character is perceived as the hero of the story?

5.2. Statistics analyses

To answer the questions above, we propose a mediation model (as presented in Figure 1) to investigate the relation of the variables as follow: (1) ethnic identity and perceived discrimination relate to well-being, (2) ethnic identity and well-being have an indirect association with choosing the woman as the hero of the story through the positive perception of both Jesus's and the woman's character, as well as the positive perception of Jesus's attitude and the woman's attitude toward each other, (3) perceived discrimination relates indirectly to the positive perception of both Jesus's and the woman's character, as well as the positive perception of Jesus's attitude toward the woman and the woman's attitude toward Jesus through well-being. In the proposed mediation model, well-being is also a mediator in the relation between ethnic identity and the positive perception of Jesus's and the woman's character and attitude (Figure 1). In order to investigate whether the proposed mediation model can be accepted, a SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) path analysis will be computed. It is an exploratory analysis to see how perceived discrimination, ethnic identity, and well-being relate to a positive perception of the two characters in the story.
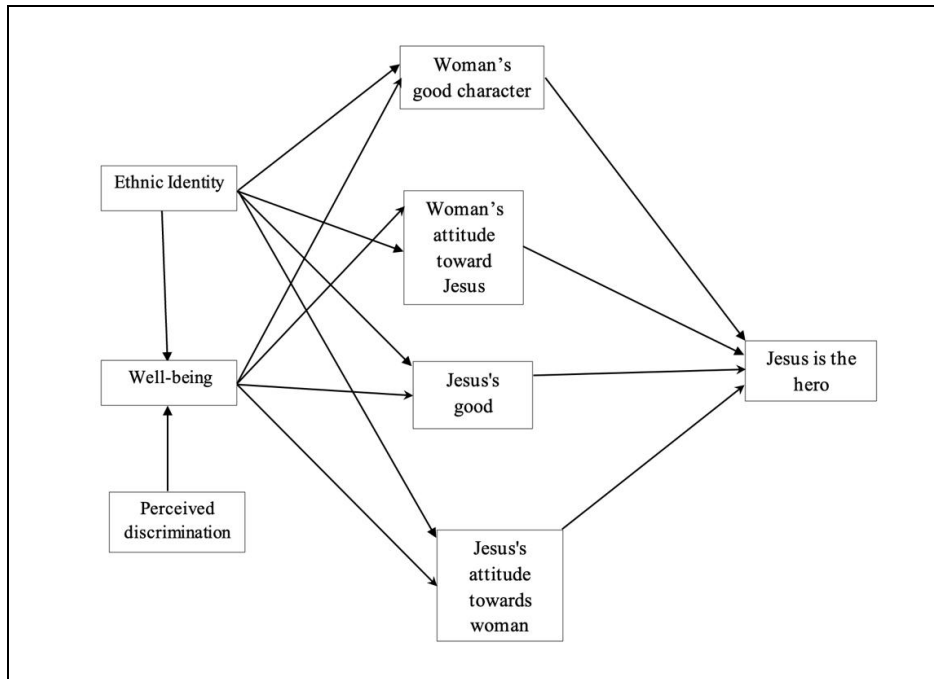
Figure 1. Proposed mediation model.

6. Methodology

6.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 230 Chinese Christian women in Indonesia with an average age of 41.70 years and an average level of university education (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Chinese Christian women, N = 230	
M (Mean), SD Education	4.97, 0.85
M (Mean), SD Age	41.70, 11.96
Level of education	**(%)**
1 = junior high	0.40
2 = high school	8.30
3 = college	9.60
4 = BA university	58.30
5 = master	23.0
6 = PhD	0.40

6.2. Procedure

The participants were recruited online from various Chinese Church denominations in big cities in Indonesia. They participated voluntarily and filled up the questionnaires online. These questionnaires were in Bahasa Indonesia. All questionnaires were translated from English into Bahasa Indonesia following a translation/back-translation procedure [44]. The translation process started with English versions. A translator proficient in the original and target languages translated the questionnaires into Indonesian. A second translator reviewed the Indonesian version against the original version and recommended refinements. The participants also read the text in the Indonesian language before they answered the questionnaires about the text.

7. Measures

7.1. Demographic characteristics

Demographic information about each participant's age, gender, ethnicity, religion and level of education was asked (Table 1).

7.2. Ethnic identity

The scale to measure ethnic identity will be the adapted version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measurement developed by Phinney [9]. The adapted scale consists of 81 endorsement format items that relate to ethnic group identification and religious group identification ($\alpha = 0.95$). The participants were asked to rate each statement in terms of how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement such as 'I consider myself Indonesian', and 'I feel that being Indonesian/Chinese is valuable' or 'I feel strongly connected to my religious community', and 'I am proud to be a member of my religious community'. Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

7.3. Well-being

Well-being is measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale ($\alpha = 0.83$) which consists of 5 items such as 'If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing' (Satisfaction with Life Scale - SWLS [45]). Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

7.4. Text interpretation

The text was adapted from Mark 7.24-30, and the name Jesus was replaced with 'spiritual leader'. To measure the positive interpretation of the two characters of the story (Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman), the respondents were asked to a give score on the good character (strong, kind, brave, humble,

and sincere) of Jesus ($\alpha = 0.73$) and the Syrophoenician woman ($\alpha = 0.74$), the attitude of Jesus (save, respect, appreciate) toward the woman ($\alpha = 0.58$) and the attitude of the Syrophoenician woman (respect and trust) toward Jesus ($\alpha = 0.64$) i.e. their attitude toward each other in the story. Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items are developed based on theological hermeneutics.

7.5. Choice of the hero of the story

There are two options: (1) Jesus as the hero is indicated by 0, and (2) the Syrophoenician woman by 1.

8. Results

8.1. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) path analysis

We proposed a mediation model, as presented in Figure 1, to show how ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, and well-being relate to the outcome on how the Chinese Christian women perceive the characters in the Bible story about Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. In the model, well-being is a mediator for the relation between both ethnic identity and perceived discrimination with the outcome variables (the positive perception on Jesus's character, the woman's character, the attitude of Jesus toward the Syrophoenician woman, and the attitude of the woman toward Jesus), and that well-being and ethnic identity are indirectly associated with choosing Jesus as the hero of the story through those variables.

A SEM path analysis was computed as an exploratory analysis to test whether the proposed mediation model fits our data. Modification indices suggested adding two regression arrows from: (1) the positive perception of the Syrophoenician woman's attitude towards Jesus and (2) the positive perception on Jesus's character to the positive attitude of Jesus towards the Syrophoenician woman (Figure 2). Modification indices also suggested adding two correlations of error variables between: (1) the positive perception of the Syrophoenician woman's character and the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus, and (2) between the positive perception of Jesus's character and Jesus's attitude toward the Syrophoenician woman (Figure 2). The results of SEM path analysis on the modified model show a very good fit (χ^2 (df) = 10.14 (11), p = 0.52, TLI = 1.01, CFI = 1.00, AGFI = 0.97, RMSEA[a]= 0.00 (0.00, 0.07)).

The results (Figure 2) show that ethnic identity relates positively to well-being and perceived discrimination is associated negatively to well-being. Well-being is associated positively with the positive perception of Syrophoenician woman's character and with the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus but is not significantly associated with the perception of respondents on Jesus's character and the attitude of Jesus toward the Syrophoenician woman. No significant direct association is evident between ethnic identity with all positive

perceptions on the Syrophoenician woman's character, the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus, Jesus's character, and the attitude of Jesus toward the Syrophoenician woman. However, positive perception of the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus is directly associated with the perception on Jesus's attitude toward the Syrophoenician woman. Only the positive perception on Jesus's character which is associated with choosing Jesus as the hero of the story.
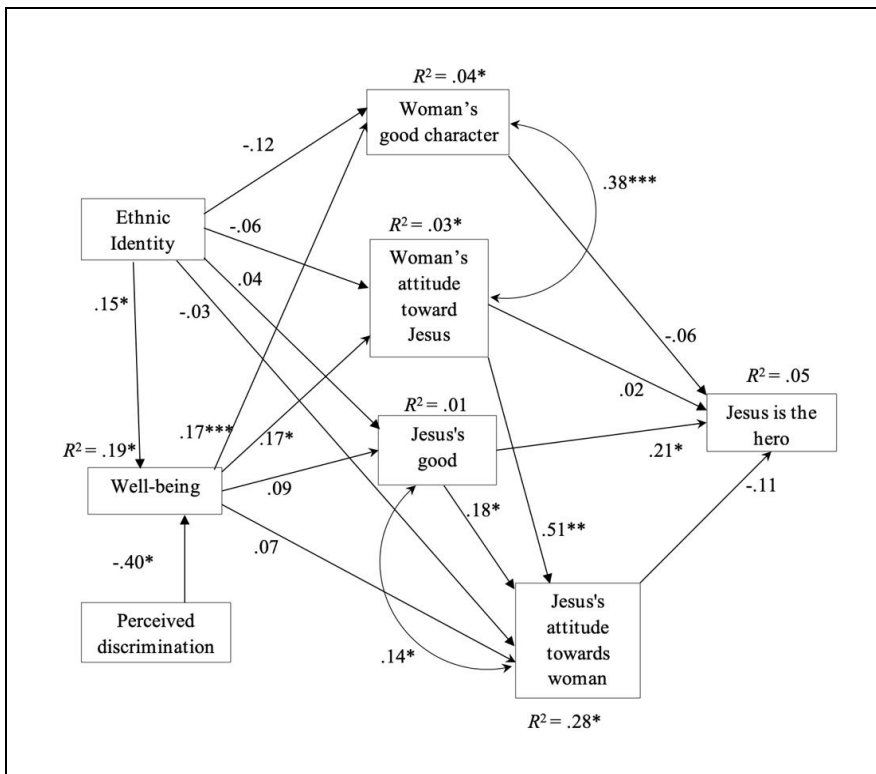

Figure 2. Regression weights of modified mediation model (standardized). *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

8.2. Mediation test results

The results of bootstrap SEM analysis for mediation test are presented in Table 2. The results of bootstrap analysis show that well-being is a mediator in the relation between ethnic identity with the positive perception of the Syrophoenician woman's character and the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus, but the significant mediation is not found in the relation between ethnic identity and the positive perception of Jesus's attitude toward the Syrophoenician woman, and Jesus's character. Perceived discrimination has an indirect effect on the positive perception on Jesus's attitude toward the woman, the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus, and the Syrophoenician woman's character through well-being. The positive perception of the

Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus is a mediator in the relation between well-being and Jesus's attitude toward the Syrophoenician woman. The rest of the mediations are not significant.

Table 2. Standardized indirect effects (structural covariances).

Variables	Ethnic identity	Perceived Discrimination	Well-being	Perception on the woman's attitude toward Jesus
Perception on the Syrophoenician woman's attitude toward Jesus	0.03***	-0.07***		
Perception on positive character of the Syrophoenician woman	0.03***	-0.07**		
Perception on positive character of Jesus	0.01	-0.04		
Perception on positive Jesus's attitude toward the Syrophoenician woman	-0.01	-0.06*	0.09*	
Jesus is the hero	0.02	0.00	-0.00	-0.06*

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

9. Discussion

As expected, perceived discrimination relates negatively to well-being [3-5] and ethnic identity relates positively to well-being [8]. From the results of the SEM analysis, all of the psychological variables, which are perceived: discrimination, ethnic identity and well-being, show an association with the positive perceptions of both characters of the story in the Bible text, either a direct association or an indirect association. Hence, similar to the previous study that psychological type preferences are associated to Bible interpretation [22, 23], we provide evidence that other psychological variables, such as perceived discrimination, ethnic, identity and well-being, are correlated to how women interpret the story of the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7.24-30.

From the results, we have found that well-being is associated directly and positively with the positive perception of the Syrophoenician woman's character and attitude. Ethnic identity has no direct association with all of the positive perceptions of the characters, but ethnic identity has an indirect association with the attitude of the Syrophoenician woman toward Jesus, and the Syrophoenician woman's character through well-being. Hence, well-being, although it has no direct associations with the perception of Jesus, is a mediator for the positive relation between ethnic identity and the positive perception of Jesus's character, the attitude of Jesus toward the Syrophoenician woman, the Syrophoenician

woman's character, and the attitude of the Syrophoenician woman to Jesus. The significant variable that relates to choosing Jesus as the hero in the story is the perception of Jesus's character. Looking at the descriptive statistics (Table 3), we can see that 67% of respondents have chosen Jesus figure as the hero. This indicates that patriarchal culture still has a significant influence on the interpretation of the text.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

Variables	Means (SD)	N
Ethnic Identity	111.29 (22.45)	230
Perceived discrimination	18.42 (6.55)	230
Well-being	25.76 (5.02)	230
Perception on Woman's character	30.50 (4.33)	230
Perception on woman's attitude	13.24 (1.32)	230
Perception on Jesus's character	33.21 (3.00)	230
Perception on Jesus's attitude	19.74 (1.92)	230
Variables	**(%)**	**N**
Choosing Jesus as the hero	67	230
Choosing Syrophoenician woman as the hero	33	230

Feminism interpretation is deliberately applied to Mark's story of Syrophoenician woman. This ideological-based interpretation presents Syrophoenician woman as the hero. Narrative components such as duration, rhetorical style and characterization, among other aspect of the story, support the characterization of Syrophoenician woman as the winner of the debate. The intelligence of feminism interpretation succeeds to switch the traditional main character, viz. Jesus, to the Syrophoenician woman, who is at first an antagonist character in the story.

The changing of values in the story is not rejectable, that the Syrophoenician woman and her point of view is very significant. She deserves honour and, more importantly, Jesus accepts her gentile ethnic identity. Patriarchal family system brought by the story is torn down. Jesus and the readers of the story must listen to what the Syrophoenician woman's saying. The feminist interpretation that the Syrophoenician woman is the hero in the story, can be accepted by part of the Chinese Indonesian women in this study. The data shows that 33% of the Chinese women in this study chose the woman as the hero in the story (Table 3).

33% of the Chinese Indonesian woman respondents agree that the Syrophoenician woman is the heroine, while the majority respondents (67%) chose the opposite (Jesus is the hero). The methodology of feminism interpretation may influence the respondents to choose the Syrophoenician woman as the heroine but the influence of patriarchal system of family among the Chinese Indonesian women seems stronger as seen in the view of majority respondents. However, the results of this study show that the reason of the

respondents for choosing Jesus as the hero is Jesus's character and attitude toward the Syrophoenician women (Figure 2). Hence, it is not merely because of patriarchal system, but because Jesus is seen as a person who respects gentile women.

Furthermore, ethnic identity does not directly influence to the positive perception of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. On the other, well-being is significant as a mediator for ethnic identity and positive perception of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. How these two results contribute to the choices which given to the Chinese Indonesian women? Socio-economic, politic and religion of Chinese Indonesian women might have an influence in the results of this study. A Chinese Indonesian woman is still seen as a migrant's descendant, but most respondents are educated women. Being seen as a migrant descendant creates crisis identity and they need to be above average in the society to be seen and to be heard. In order to survive, they must take a role as an open-ended figure when facing difficult circumstances. Although the percentage of respondents' choice is not actually balanced, the respondents choosing the Syrophoenician woman as the hero represent the growing of Chinese Indonesian women who are unattached to their predecessors' or ancestors' worldview. The feminism interpretation is still 'under struggle' to be acknowledged by Chinese Indonesian women but it also means that the traditional view that Jesus is the hero is getting eroded.

10. Limitation

Most respondents in our study had high education level (college or above). It is needed to see whether the similar results will be found among lower educated women. It is also important to note that our study is correlational and the sample is only from one minority group of women. Another study needs to be conducted to investigate whether similar relations between variables are found in different groups.

11. Conclusion

From this study we give evidence that psychological variable relates to interpretation of the text [22, 23]. From this study, we also show that the majority Chinese women in Indonesia would choose Jesus as the hero of the story, especially when they perceive the positive character of Jesus. And how the Chinese women in Indonesia perceived the positive character of Jesus is also related to their perception on the positive attitude of the Syrophoenician woman and the attitude of Jesus toward the Syrophoenician woman. The positive perceptions on both characters are related to well-being, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination. The stronger and the better the well-being and ethnic identity, the more positive the women perceive Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. Moreover, the fact that part of the respondents chose the Syrophoenician woman as the hero of the story in Mark 7.24-30 is also a remark

that the feminism interpretation starts to be accepted by the Chinese women in Indonesia. Generally, the Chinese women in Indonesia perceive that the good character of the person in the story is the significant factor for choosing the hero. How Jesus respects the Syrophoenician woman has influence in choosing Jesus as the hero in the story. Hence, Jesus deserves to be chosen as the hero of the story because Jesus respects women.

References

[1] A.J. Thomas, K.M. Witherspoon and S.L. Speight, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, **14(4)** (2008) 307-314.

[2] I.H. Settles, C.D. Navarrete, S.J. Pagano, C.M. Abdou and J. Sidanius, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, **16(2)** (2010) 248-255.

[3] R. Kessler, K. Mickelson and D. Williams, J. Health Soc. Behav., **40(3)** (1999) 208-230.

[4] T. Sasao and C.A. Chun, J. Community Psychol., **22(2)** (1994) 136-152.

[5] E. Brondolo, S. Thompson, N. Brady, R. Appel, A.N. Cassells, J.N. Tobin and M. Sweeney, Ethnicity and Disease, **15(Suppl. 5)** (2005) 14-19.

[6] S. Noh, M. Beiser, V. Kaspar, F. Hou and J. Rummens, J. Health Soc. Behav., **40(3)** (1999) 193-207.

[7] K. Mossakowski, J. Health Soc. Behav., **44(3)** (2003) 318-331.

[8] B.T. Sari, A. Chasiotis, F.J.R. Van de Vijver and M. Bender, J. Multiling. Multicul., **39(10)** (2018) 853-867.

[9] J.S. Phinney, J. Adolescent Res., **7(2)** (1992) 156-176.

[10] R.M. Sellers, S.A.J. Rowley, T.M. Chavous, J.N. Shelton and M.A. Smith, J. Pers. Soc. Psychol., **73(4)** (1997) 805-815.

[11] R. Brown, Eur. J. Soc. Psychol., **30(6)** (2000) 745-778.

[12] H. Tajfel and J. Turner, *The social identity theory of intergroup behavior*, in *Psychology of intergroup relations*, 2nd edn., S. Worchel & W. Austin (eds.), Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1986, 7-24.

[13] J.S. Phinney, G. Horenczyk, K. Liebkind and P. Vedder, J. Soc. Issues, **57(3)** (2001) 493-510.

[14] J.S. Phinney and M. Devich-Navarro, J. Adolescent Res., **7(1)** (1997) 3-32.

[15] M.J. Rotheram and J.S. Phinney, *Introduction: Definitions and perspectives in the study of children's ethnic socialization*, in *Children's ethnic socialization: Pluralism and development*, J.S. Phinney & M.J. Rotheram (eds.), Sage, Newbury Park, 1987, 10-28.

[16] J. Berry, *Psychology of acculturation*, in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, Vol. 37, J. Berman (ed.), University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1990, 201-234.

[17] J. Berry, Applied Psychology, **46(1)** (1997) 5-68.

[18] K. Liebkind, J. Cross Cult. Psychol., **27(2)** (1996) 161-180.

[19] D. Nesdale, R. Rooney and L. Smith, J. Cross Cult. Psychol., **28(5)** (1997) 569-588.

[20] S.O. Utsey, M.H. Chae, C.F. Brown and D. Kelly, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, **8(4)** (2002) 366-377.

[21] S. Paas, Interreligious Study and Intercultural Theology, **1(1)** (2017) 133-139.

[22] A. Village and L. Francis, Journal of Empirical Theology, **18(1)** (2005) 74-89.

[23] A. Village, Journal of Empirical Theology, **23(2)** (2010) 179-200.

[24] E.S. Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*, Beacon, Boston, 1993.

[25] E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 2nd edn., SCM, London, 1996, 32-36.

[26] N.G. Mamahit, Forum Biblika, **10(1)** (2009) 6-14.

[27] R.A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1989, 316-318.

[28] J. Marcus, *Mark*, Doubleday, New York, 2000, 470-471.

[29] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2002, 296.

[30] A. Hauw, *The Function of Exorcism Stories in Mark's Gospel*, Wipf & Stock, Oregon, 2019, 155.

[31] S.D. Moore, *The Dog-Woman of Canaan and Other Animal Tales from the Gospel of Matthew*, in *Soundings in Cultural Criticism: Perspectives and Methods in Culture, Power, and Identity in the New Testament*, F. Lozada & G. Carey (eds.), Fortress, Minneapolis, 2013, 57-68.

[32] K.H. Tan, *The Gospel According to Mark*, ATA, Manila, 2011, 172.

[33] C.S. Pero, *Liberation from Empire: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark*, Peter Lang, New York, 2013, 168.

[34] S.M. Lim, *Ruang Sosial Baru Perempuan Tionghoa Sebuah Kajian Pascakolonial,* Obor, Jakarta, 2009, 3.

[35] L. Suryadinata, *Negara dan Etnis Tionghoa Kasus Indonesia*, LP3ES, Jakarta, 2002, 7-230.

[36] M.G. Tan, *Etnis Tionghoa di Indonesia,* Obor, Jakarta, 2008, 33.

[37] C. Hartono, *Orang Tionghoa dan Pekabaran Injil*, Taman Pustaka Kristen, Yogyakarta, 1996, 56.

[38] L. Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Pembangunan Bangsa*, LP3ES, Jakarta, 1999, 72-150.

[39] L. Suryadinata, *Pemikiran Politik Etnis Tionghoa Indonesia 1900-2002*, LP3ES, Jakarta, 2005, 413.

[40] D. Angraeni, *Tragedi Mei 1998 dan Lahirnya Komnas Perempuan*, Kompas, Jakarta, 2014, x-xiii.

[41] X. Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, CUP, Cambridge, 2000, 183.

[42] I. Ibrahim, Society **1(1)** (2013) 46-55.

[43] D.J. Cranmer and B.E. Eck, J. Psychol. Theol., **22(3)** (1994) 201-214.

[44] F.J.R. Vijver and K. Leung, *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research*, Sage, Newbury Park, 1997, 29-63.

[45] E. Diener, R.A. Emmons, R.J. Larsen and S. Griffin, J. Pers. Assess., **49(1)** (1985) 71-75.