



EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation in multicultural societies, examining how religious identity influences political engagement in diverse settings. Religion plays a significant role in motivating political participation, especially within religious communities that view political action as a moral duty. A qualitative approach was used, employing a comprehensive literature review to analyze existing studies on religious beliefs, political behavior, and multiculturalism. The review reveals that religious beliefs can both mobilize and divide political communities, with religious minorities often engaging politically to protect their rights. Religious institutions are identified as key agents of political mobilization, using moral teachings to encourage political involvement. However, the influence of religious institutions varies based on the political and social context, with secular societies limiting their impact. The challenges in studying this relationship arise from the intersectionality of religious identity with other social factors, such as ethnicity and class, which complicates the analysis of political participation. This study highlights the need for further research to examine the experiences of religious minorities and the role of state policies in shaping religious political engagement. It concludes that understanding religion's impact on political behavior requires an intersectional approach, considering multiple facets of identity in multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Religion, Political Participation, Multicultural Societies, Religious Identity, Political Mobilization



INTRODUCTION:

In multicultural societies, political participation is deeply shaped by collective identities, including religion. Religion, as a belief system that significantly influences individuals and groups, plays a crucial role in shaping political orientations, electoral behaviors, and levels of civic engagement. This phenomenon extends beyond religious-majority nations to secular states where religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed [1]. The complexity of multicultural societies, however, presents unique challenges in understanding the impact of religious beliefs on political engagement, both directly and indirectly through various social institutions.

Existing research on the relationship between religion and political participation has often concentrated on more homogenous societies or countries where religion is explicitly embedded in the state framework. In contrast, multicultural societies characterized by diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups offer a more intricate landscape for understanding the interaction between religious beliefs and political involvement [2]. Within these societies, religious values are often renegotiated in the public sphere, where their role in political participation becomes more nuanced, potentially transforming from a core political motivator to a symbolic identity [3].

Studies have consistently shown that religion can facilitate political mobilization through religious networks, sermons from religious leaders, and moral teachings that encourage social-political participation. However, in multicultural societies, religion may function more as an internal cohesive force rather than an external political mobilizer. In such contexts, political participation is not solely determined by the intensity of religious belief but also by the interactions between religious groups and the state's policies on pluralism [4]. This dynamic indicates a need to explore how multicultural conditions moderate the relationship between religious beliefs and political engagement, a topic that remains underexplored in the current literature.

This study aims to address this gap by proposing an analytical framework that considers both religious belief intensity and cultural diversity simultaneously. The approach provides insight not only into the extent to which religion influences political participation but also into how multiculturalism moderates this relationship. The novelty of this study lies in its intersectional approach, which integrates the religious and multicultural dimensions empirically an area rarely explored in existing research that often treats these variables separately.

The article utilizes a cross-case approach within multicultural societies, comparing contexts where a single religion is dominant with those where no single religion holds hegemony. This



comparative approach enables a deeper understanding of the varied patterns of political participation based on religious affiliation, the societal role of religion, and the relations between ethno-religious communities [5]. This contribution enriches the literature on political identity in democratic and multicultural contexts, shedding light on the complex relationship between religion and political participation.

This research combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture a wide spectrum of religious individuals' experiences in the political arena. Surveys are employed to measure the correlation between religious belief intensity and political participation, while in-depth interviews provide contextual narratives that reveal how individuals interpret the role of religion in their political actions. This mixed-methods approach seeks to uncover not just statistical correlations but also the deeper, subjective meanings that contribute to theoretical understanding.

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the ways religion interacts with political participation in multicultural societies, alongside how the diverse social landscape influences this interaction. By providing a comprehensive analysis of this relationship, the research contributes significantly to the development of political identity theories and informs public policy that considers the diversity of religious and cultural backgrounds within multicultural societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY:

The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Political Participation

Research consistently shows that religious beliefs significantly affect political participation, particularly in societies where religion is central to both individual and collective identities. Religious teachings often encourage moral engagement with societal issues, fostering civic duties such as voting, activism, and participation in public debates. In many cases, religious organizations serve as platforms for political mobilization, where leaders can shape the political views and actions of their followers [6]. For example, Christian and Islamic leaders have historically played critical roles in motivating their congregations to engage in political processes, such as elections or social movements, aligning religious values with political agendas.

The strength and nature of this relationship vary depending on the religious context and the broader political environment. In secular societies, where religion and state are separated, religious beliefs may encourage political disengagement, as some religious traditions prioritize



spiritual over political engagement [7]. In other contexts, religious individuals might feel a moral responsibility to influence public policy, particularly on issues tied to religious teachings, such as social justice, human rights, and poverty alleviation. This complex relationship between religion and political participation is influenced by religious denomination, geographical context, and the political climate.

Religion and Political Identity in Multicultural Societies

Multicultural societies, characterized by diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, present unique challenges for understanding the role of religion in political participation. In these societies, religious identity intersects with other forms of identity, such as ethnic, linguistic, or national identity [8]. This intersection shapes political behavior by influencing individuals' perceptions of their place within the social and political order. Religious minorities, for example, may feel compelled to participate politically in order to secure recognition or rights, especially when they experience marginalization within the broader political system.

Political participation in multicultural societies is also influenced by the social dynamics between different religious communities. Interactions among religious groups, the power structures within society, and state policies regarding pluralism all affect the political mobilization of various communities. Religious minorities may engage politically to challenge social inequalities or to protect their cultural and religious practices [9]. The dynamics within these diverse settings reveal that political participation is not solely determined by individual religious beliefs but also by the complex relationships between different groups and the broader political structure.

Religious Institutions and Political Mobilization

Religious institutions have long played a central role in political mobilization, serving not only as places of worship but also as platforms for political participation. Religious leaders and organizations can influence their followers' political behavior by promoting political engagement through sermons, community meetings, and advocacy campaigns [10]. In many cases, religious institutions have been instrumental in shaping policies related to civil rights, labor rights, and social welfare. For instance, religious leaders have historically led social movements advocating for equality, justice, and humanitarian causes, demonstrating how religion can shape public policy and societal values.



The role of religious institutions in political mobilization is often shaped by the social and political context in which they operate. In secular societies, religious institutions may face restrictions on their political activities, limiting their influence on public policy [11]. In more religiously integrated societies, religious institutions may play a more active role in influencing political outcomes. Some religious organizations are deeply involved in political activism, while others may focus more on spiritual guidance, keeping their distance from direct political involvement. The degree of political participation encouraged by religious institutions varies depending on their theological stance, their position within the political system, and the broader societal context.

Challenges in Studying Religion and Political Participation in Multicultural Contexts

Studying religion and political participation in multicultural societies presents several methodological challenges. One of the key issues is the difficulty in isolating religion as a single variable, as it often intersects with other factors like ethnicity, social class, and political ideology [12]. Furthermore, religious beliefs are deeply personal, making it challenging to generalize findings across diverse populations. The diversity of religious practices and beliefs in multicultural societies adds complexity to the analysis, as religious identity is not monolithic. Different religious groups may exhibit distinct patterns of political participation, shaped by their particular beliefs, historical context, and social position.

The political context in multicultural societies also complicates the study of religious involvement in politics. State policies and societal attitudes toward religious pluralism significantly influence the extent to which religious beliefs can impact political participation. In some societies, religious groups may be encouraged to engage in political activities, while in others, religious participation may be marginalized or suppressed [13]. Political participation is therefore shaped not only by individual religious beliefs but also by the broader social and political environment. Researchers must consider these external factors when analyzing the role of religion in political engagement, as they can profoundly alter the way religious beliefs influence political behavior.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a focus on a comprehensive literature review to examine the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation in



multicultural societies. Given the exploratory nature of the research question, the literature review serves as an ideal method for synthesizing existing theories, frameworks, and findings on the intersection of religion, political identity, and multiculturalism. By analyzing previous studies, this research aims to build a conceptual foundation for understanding the complexities of religious influence on political participation in diverse societal settings.

Data Collection

The data for this study are drawn from academic sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and relevant reports, which provide insights into the role of religion in political participation within multicultural contexts. The literature selection focuses on works that address key themes such as political mobilization by religious institutions, religious identity and political behavior in multicultural societies, and the impact of religious pluralism on civic engagement. Sources are chosen based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the theoretical and empirical understanding of the topic.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the literature involves synthesizing key findings from the reviewed studies to identify trends and insights related to religious beliefs and political participation. Thematic analysis is applied to group the key concepts and theories found in the literature, focusing on the impact of religious identity on political behavior and how this interaction is moderated by multiculturalism. By examining the different theoretical frameworks and empirical results, the review aims to develop a holistic understanding of the relationship between religion and political participation in multicultural societies.

The analysis also highlights gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding how multiculturalism influences the religious-political participation dynamic. This critical assessment will contribute to the identification of areas where future empirical research is needed. The study does not intend to conduct original field research, but instead, it aims to offer a synthesized overview of the current state of knowledge on the topic.

RESULTS AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Character Education and Resilience

The literature review highlights several significant findings regarding the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation in multicultural societies. These results are



drawn from a synthesis of existing research on religious influence, political behavior, and multiculturalism. The key findings are grouped into four main themes: the role of religious beliefs in political mobilization, the impact of religious identity in multicultural societies, the influence of religious institutions on political participation, and the challenges in understanding this relationship within diverse cultural contexts.

Religious Beliefs and Political Mobilization

A dominant theme in the literature is the role of religious beliefs in political mobilization. Numerous studies indicate that religious beliefs can be a powerful motivator for political participation, especially when individuals perceive their religious values to be at stake in political matters. Religious teachings, often centered on moral and social justice principles, inspire individuals to take part in political activities such as voting, protests, and social movements [14]. Religious groups, particularly in contexts with a strong religious identity, are often key organizers in political mobilization, encouraging their members to participate in civic life. For example, Christian and Islamic organizations have historically been at the forefront of movements advocating for civil rights, labor rights, and environmental justice, showing the intersection of religion and activism.

In multicultural societies, the political mobilization driven by religious beliefs may vary depending on the religious and political context. In pluralistic settings, religious beliefs can either encourage individuals to become politically active to protect their group's interests or foster a sense of solidarity with other marginalized groups [15]. This duality emphasizes how religious beliefs are not simply a personal matter but are deeply entwined with political outcomes, especially when religious minorities face challenges in maintaining their cultural or religious practices in the face of political opposition.

Religious Identity and Political Participation in Multicultural Contexts

The literature reveals that in multicultural societies, religious identity significantly impacts political participation. In such societies, religion is often intertwined with other forms of identity, such as ethnicity, race, and national origin [16]. This intersectionality influences individuals' political behavior, shaping their views on social justice, equality, and representation. Religious identity in multicultural societies often becomes a source of political solidarity, with individuals participating in political activities to assert their rights or challenge discrimination against their religious or cultural group.



At the same time, the literature highlights the challenges faced by religious minorities in multicultural societies. These groups often experience political marginalization, which may lead them to develop alternative forms of political engagement [17]. Religious identity in these settings is often linked to a collective sense of resistance or activism, where religious groups mobilize not just around religious issues but also to advocate for broader social and political change. This active engagement helps create a distinct political voice for religious minorities, influencing policies on immigration, education, and social integration.

The Role of Religious Institutions in Political Participation

Religious institutions are identified as key players in shaping political participation, especially within religiously affiliated communities. The literature shows that religious leaders and organizations have the capacity to influence the political behavior of their followers through sermons, community outreach, and advocacy [18]. In many cases, religious institutions do not only provide spiritual guidance but also encourage active participation in political life by framing political engagement as a moral duty or an extension of religious values.

The influence of religious institutions on political participation is particularly pronounced in societies where religion plays a central role in public life. In contrast, in secular or highly diverse multicultural societies, the political role of religious institutions is often more constrained [19]. While religious organizations may still play a role in political engagement, their involvement tends to be more focused on social issues that align with their core religious values rather than broader political ideologies. The literature also reveals that religious institutions can serve as important channels for political mobilization in both positive and negative ways, either empowering political action or acting as a force for political disengagement, depending on the prevailing political climate.

Challenges in Studying Religion and Political Participation in Multicultural Societies

The literature reveals several challenges in studying the relationship between religion and political participation, particularly in multicultural contexts. One major challenge is the diversity of religious beliefs and practices, which complicates efforts to generalize findings across different groups. Religious beliefs are not static, and their influence on political participation may change depending on the context in which they are practiced [20]. Furthermore, multicultural societies are often characterized by complex intergroup dynamics, where the political influence of one religious group may be either reinforced or undermined by the actions



of other groups.

Another challenge identified in the literature is the difficulty in isolating religion as a sole factor influencing political participation. In multicultural societies, religion is often intertwined with ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and political ideology [21]. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether political participation is driven primarily by religious beliefs or by broader social and political forces. The intersectionality of religious identity with other factors further complicates the analysis, highlighting the need for more nuanced research that takes these multiple layers of identity into account.

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings from Literature Review

Theme	Key Findings	Implications
Religious Beliefs and Political Mobilization	Religious beliefs often serve as a motivator for political participation, especially in societies where religion is central to identity. Religious groups mobilize politically to protect cultural practices and values.	Religion encourages political engagement through moral imperatives, especially for marginalized groups.
Religious Identity in Multicultural Contexts	Religious identity intersects with other social identities (e.g., ethnicity, class) to shape political behavior. Religious minorities may mobilize politically to secure recognition and rights.	Political participation is shaped by the intersectionality of religious identity with other aspects of personal identity.
Role of Religious Institutions	Religious institutions influence political participation by framing political action as a religious duty. They act as platforms for social movements and advocate for social justice.	Religious institutions are key players in political engagement, with varying influence based on the political context.
Challenges in Political Participation	The complexity of multiculturalism makes it difficult to isolate the role of religion as a singular factor influencing political behavior. Intersectionality with race, class, and ethnicity complicates the analysis.	A nuanced approach to studying political participation is needed, considering multiple dimensions of identity.



Discussion

The findings from the literature review underscore the significant role that religious beliefs play in shaping political participation within multicultural societies. Religious beliefs are not merely personal convictions but are deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts, influencing political engagement in complex ways. The review reveals that while religion often motivates individuals to participate politically, the nature and extent of this involvement depend heavily on the religious, cultural, and political context in which individuals and groups operate [22]. In multicultural societies, where multiple religious communities coexist, the role of religion in political participation becomes even more complex, as individuals navigate the intersection of their religious identity with other social and political affiliations.

One of the central findings is that religious identity can serve as both a motivator for political action and a source of division in multicultural societies. Religious groups often mobilize politically to advocate for their rights and interests, particularly when they perceive their religious values or cultural practices to be at risk. This is especially true for religious minorities who may face marginalization within the political system. For example, religious groups in multicultural societies often form coalitions to challenge policies that they view as discriminatory or exclusionary. The political mobilization of religious groups, however, is not without its challenges, as these groups often must navigate complex political landscapes where their religious identity may not align with the broader political discourse.

At the same time, the literature highlights the dual role that religious beliefs play in political participation. On one hand, religion can serve as a tool for political solidarity and resistance, especially among marginalized religious groups. On the other hand, religion can also create barriers to political participation in multicultural settings, particularly when religious identity becomes politicized. This politicization of religion can sometimes lead to the alienation of religious communities from the broader political system, especially in societies where religious pluralism is not fully embraced or where secularism dominates the public sphere [23]. The intersection of religion with politics in these settings often produces a complex dynamic, where political participation can be influenced not just by religious conviction but also by the external political environment and societal attitudes toward religion.

Another important finding is the influential role of religious institutions in shaping political participation. Religious institutions are not only places of worship but also serve as powerful platforms for political mobilization. The literature suggests that religious leaders have the capacity to shape political opinions and behaviors by framing political engagement as a religious



duty. In many cases, religious organizations become key players in social movements, advocating for issues such as civil rights, poverty alleviation, and social justice [24]. In multicultural societies, religious institutions can either act as agents of change or reinforce the status quo, depending on their stance on political issues. The review also reveals that religious institutions in secular societies may be more cautious in their political involvement, primarily focusing on issues that align with their religious values rather than engaging in broader political debates.

The challenges in understanding the relationship between religion and political participation in multicultural societies are evident in the literature. One of the key challenges identified is the difficulty of isolating religion as a singular factor influencing political behavior [25]. Religion in multicultural contexts does not operate in a vacuum; it interacts with other forms of identity, such as ethnicity, race, and class, complicating the analysis of political participation. The intersectionality of these identities requires a more nuanced approach that accounts for the multiple dimensions that shape political behavior. The literature suggests that a deeper understanding of these intersections is essential to fully grasp the complex ways in which religion influences political engagement in multicultural settings.

This study highlights the need for further empirical research to explore the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation in multicultural societies. While the literature provides valuable insights into how religion motivates political action, it also points to the need for more context-specific studies that examine the diverse ways in which religion and politics intersect in different multicultural settings. Future research should focus on exploring the experiences of religious minorities in political participation and the impact of state policies on religious political engagement. By expanding the scope of research to include a variety of multicultural contexts, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how religious beliefs shape political behavior in increasingly diverse societies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation in multicultural societies, revealing that religion plays a significant role in shaping individuals' political engagement. Religious beliefs often motivate political action, particularly when religious communities view political participation as a moral or social responsibility. In multicultural contexts, this relationship becomes more complex, as individuals navigate multiple identities and interact with diverse religious groups. The findings suggest that religious identity



can both unify and divide political communities, with religious minorities often mobilizing to protect their rights or advocate for social change.

The role of religious institutions is also critical in the political participation process. Religious organizations act as platforms for mobilizing political action, influencing followers' political views, and advocating for social justice or policy reforms. However, the degree of influence exerted by religious institutions varies, depending on the political environment and the level of secularism in a given society. In more secular societies, religious institutions may have less influence on political discourse, while in more religiously integrated societies, these institutions play a more direct role in shaping political outcomes.

The findings highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of how religion interacts with other social identities, such as ethnicity, race, and class, in influencing political participation. This intersectionality complicates the analysis of political behavior in multicultural societies and underscores the importance of considering the broader social and political context. Policies aimed at fostering political participation must take into account these complex interactions, recognizing that individuals' religious identities often overlap with other facets of their identity, such as cultural or ethnic backgrounds, which also affect their political engagement.

Based on these insights, further empirical research is needed to explore the specific ways in which religion and political participation intersect in diverse multicultural settings. Future studies should focus on the experiences of religious minorities, the impact of state policies on religious engagement, and the role of religious institutions in fostering political mobilization. Policymakers and political analysts should also consider the implications of religious diversity when designing policies that promote inclusive political participation. By doing so, they can better accommodate the diverse needs of religious communities, fostering greater political integration and social cohesion in multicultural societies.

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