

International Journal of Culture and Religious Studies

(IJCRS)

Religion, Culture, and Politics: Analyzing the Influence of Religious
Beliefs on Sociopolitical Dynamics



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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics in Sub Saharan countries.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics in Sub Saharan countries. The empirical review revealed that the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics is a significant and complex phenomenon, as evidenced by the empirical studies reviewed. Religious beliefs have been found to shape political participation, attitudes toward gender roles, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, social activism, and environmental attitudes. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the interplay between religion and sociopolitical dynamics and provide valuable insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and society as a whole.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Keywords: The Secularization theory, Resource Mobilization theory and the Political Theology theory may be used to anchor future studies relating to the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics. This study recommends that by fostering interreligious dialogue, promoting human rights and equality, encouraging critical thinking and education, enhancing collaboration between religious and secular institutions, and supporting grassroots initiatives, societies can navigate the complexities of religious beliefs and create sociopolitical dynamics that embrace diversity and foster social progress.

Keywords: *Religious Beliefs, Sociopolitical Dynamics, Political Participation, Gender Roles, Social Activism*

INTRODUCTION

The global sociopolitical dynamic is characterized by a diverse range of political ideologies, economic systems, and social movements across nations. According to a study by World Values Survey (2020), political attitudes and values vary significantly worldwide, with countries exhibiting different levels of political participation, trust in institutions, and support for democracy. Additionally, economic factors shape sociopolitical dynamics, with data from the International Monetary Fund (2021) highlighting disparities in wealth distribution and income inequality among countries. Furthermore, the rise of populist movements and the impact of globalization have influenced global sociopolitical dynamics, as demonstrated in various political events and shifts in power balances.

The sociopolitical dynamics in the United States have been shaped by various factors, including political polarization and income inequality. According to Abramowitz & Webster (2018) political polarization in the United States has been steadily increasing over the past few decades. The study found that the ideological gap between Republicans and Democrats has widened significantly, leading to greater partisan conflict and gridlock in the political system. This trend has implications for policy-making and the ability of the government to address pressing societal issues. Income inequality is another significant factor influencing sociopolitical dynamics in the United States. Income inequality in the United States has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. The top 1% of income earners in the country captured a disproportionate share of economic gains, while the income growth for the majority of households stagnated. Such disparities in wealth distribution can lead to social unrest, influence political campaigns, and shape public policy debates (Piketty, Saez & Zucman, 2016)

The sociopolitical dynamics in the United States are complex and ever-evolving, shaped by a range of factors such as ideology, demographics, and historical context. One prominent feature is political polarization, with deep divisions between the major political parties, the Democrats and Republicans. This polarization is reflected in policy debates, public discourse, and voting patterns. It has been a defining characteristic of U.S. politics, leading to challenges in finding common ground and compromising on key issues (Douglas Fir Group, 2016)

Another significant aspect of sociopolitical dynamics is the ongoing pursuit of racial and social justice. The United States has a diverse population, and discussions on racial equity, systemic racism, and social inequality have gained prominence in recent years. Movements like Black Lives Matter have sparked nationwide conversations about police brutality, racial profiling, and the need for structural reforms. Additionally, issues such as immigration, religious freedom, and gender equality have also been subjects of sociopolitical debates, highlighting the ongoing struggles for equal rights and representation (Howard & Navarro, 2016)

Economic concerns and income inequality have been critical factors in shaping sociopolitical dynamics in the United States. Despite being one of the world's wealthiest nations, the country faces significant income disparities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2019, the top 1% of households earned approximately 16.7% of the total income, while the bottom 20% earned only 3.1%. These disparities have fueled discussions on wealth distribution, taxation

policies, and social safety nets. Debates on the role of government in addressing economic inequality and ensuring economic mobility have been central to sociopolitical discourse (Adam Cobb, 2016)

The sociopolitical dynamics in the United Kingdom are shaped by a variety of factors, including political parties, regional differences, and societal debates. One key aspect is the party system, dominated by the Conservative Party and the Labour Party (Fraune & Knodt, 2018) The Conservative Party, traditionally associated with right-leaning policies, emphasizes fiscal responsibility and a free-market economy. On the other hand, the Labour Party, with its roots in the labor movement, advocates for social justice, workers' rights, and a more interventionist role for the government. The interplay between these two major parties and their policy positions influences the sociopolitical landscape in the UK.

Brexit has had a profound impact on sociopolitical dynamics in the UK. The decision to leave the European Union, as expressed in the 2016 referendum, highlighted deep divisions within the country. The Brexit process generated heated debates, not only on matters of economics and trade but also on issues of national identity, immigration, and sovereignty. These discussions have resulted in realignments within the political landscape, impacting the dynamics among different regions of the UK, such as Scotland and Northern Ireland, where there are calls for independence due to differing views on Brexit (Wellings, 2021)

Sociopolitical dynamics in the UK also encompass ongoing discussions on issues such as social inequality, healthcare, and education. Similar to other countries, income disparity remains a significant concern, with debates centered on wealth distribution and social mobility. The National Health Service (NHS) plays a central role in the political discourse, with discussions on funding, access, and the quality of healthcare. Education policies, including university tuition fees and educational reforms, are also subjects of sociopolitical debates, as different parties and stakeholders offer competing visions for the future of education in the UK (Bonina, Koskinen, Eaton & Gawer, 2021)

Overall, the sociopolitical dynamics in the United Kingdom are influenced by the party system, the impact of Brexit, and ongoing discussions on social inequality, healthcare, and education. These dynamics reflect the diverse perspectives and interests within the country, shaping the political landscape and policy priorities. It is worth noting that sociopolitical dynamics can evolve over time, responding to societal changes, economic conditions, and emerging issues that shape public sentiment and political discourse.

The sociopolitical dynamics in Japan are characterized by a unique blend of traditional values, modern governance, and societal norms. Japan has a parliamentary system with multiple political parties, but the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been the dominant force in Japanese politics for much of the post-World War II era (Sayari, 2016). The LDP has traditionally embraced conservative policies, emphasizing economic growth, strong ties with the United States, and stability. However, there has been a rise in opposition parties in recent years, leading to a diversification of the political landscape.

One significant sociopolitical aspect in Japan is the demographic challenge of an aging population and low birth rate. These demographic trends have implications for various social and economic factors, including healthcare, pensions, and the labor market. Policymakers in Japan are

grappling with the need to address these challenges through initiatives such as social security reforms, increased support for working parents, and immigration policies. Societal debates on work-life balance, gender equality, and family values are also part of the sociopolitical landscape in Japan (Heller, 2016)

Another important aspect of sociopolitical dynamics in Japan is the ongoing dialogue on national security and pacifism. Japan's constitution, established after World War II, includes Article 9, which renounces the country's right to wage war. However, there have been discussions and debates around revising this article to allow for a more assertive role in international security affairs. These discussions involve considerations of Japan's alliance with the United States, the regional security environment, and the balance between maintaining peace and ensuring national defense (Sterling, 2020)

In summary, the sociopolitical dynamics in Japan encompass a range of factors, including dominant political parties, demographic challenges, and discussions on national security. These dynamics reflect the country's unique blend of traditional values and modern governance, as policymakers navigate social and economic changes in a rapidly evolving global context. It is important to recognize that sociopolitical dynamics can evolve over time, influenced by domestic and international events, as well as societal and economic shifts.

The sociopolitical dynamics in India are characterized by a diverse and vibrant democracy, encompassing a wide range of political ideologies, regional identities, and cultural pluralism. India operates as a federal parliamentary democratic republic, with multiple political parties playing active roles in the political landscape (Santas, & Ogoshi, 2016). The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) are among the major political forces in the country, each representing different visions and policies. Sociopolitical dynamics in India are influenced by a variety of factors, including religious diversity, caste-based politics, regional disparities, and socio-economic issues. Debates on secularism, social justice, economic development, and governance shape the sociopolitical discourse in India, as policymakers navigate the aspirations and concerns of its vast and diverse population.

The sociopolitical dynamics in Brazil are characterized by a complex interplay of diverse ideologies, regional disparities, and societal challenges. Brazil operates as a federal presidential constitutional republic, with multiple political parties vying for power. The political landscape is marked by a diverse range of ideologies, with the left-wing Workers' Party (PT) and the right-wing Social Liberal Party (PSL) being prominent examples. Sociopolitical dynamics in Brazil are heavily influenced by issues such as income inequality, corruption, crime rates, and environmental concerns. Debates on social policies, economic reforms, and the role of government shape the sociopolitical discourse as policymakers grapple with the country's social and economic challenges. The diverse and passionate nature of Brazilian society contributes to a dynamic sociopolitical environment that continues to evolve over time (Souza, 2016)

Nigeria operates as a federal presidential republic, with multiple political parties actively participating in the political landscape. The country's sociopolitical dynamics are influenced by a range of factors, including issues of governance, economic development, security challenges, and interethnic relations. Nigeria's vast ethnic and religious diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and a significant Muslim-Christian divide, contributes to the complexities of sociopolitical dynamics (Innocent, Eikojonwa & Yusoff, 2020) Debates on power-sharing, resource allocation, social

justice, and national unity shape the sociopolitical discourse as policymakers strive to address the aspirations and concerns of Nigeria's diverse population. The evolving sociopolitical landscape in Nigeria reflects a continuous process of negotiation and engagement, as the country navigates its path towards progress and stability.

Sub-Saharan Africa comprises a wide range of countries with varying political systems, ethnic compositions, and economic conditions. One prevalent aspect of sociopolitical dynamics is the transition to democracy and the consolidation of democratic institutions. Many countries in the region have experienced shifts towards democratic governance, though challenges related to corruption, limited political freedoms, and uneven power distribution persist in some cases (Mateos & Erro, 2021). Another key dimension of sociopolitical dynamics in Sub-Saharan countries is the presence of ethnic and tribal diversity. The region is home to a multitude of ethnic groups with distinct cultural and linguistic identities. Ethnic tensions and conflicts occasionally arise, influenced by historical grievances, resource competition, and power struggles. Managing and reconciling these diverse ethnic dynamics is an ongoing challenge for governments, as they seek to promote social cohesion and inclusive governance.

Economic development and poverty reduction are significant drivers of sociopolitical dynamics in Sub-Saharan countries. The region faces persistent challenges of poverty, inequality, and limited access to basic services. These issues often fuel social unrest, political grievances, and demands for greater socio-economic inclusion. Governments are increasingly under pressure to address these concerns by implementing policies aimed at sustainable development, job creation, and social welfare programs (Anyanwu & Anyanwu, 2017)

In a nutshell, the sociopolitical dynamics in Sub-Saharan countries are influenced by factors such as the transition to democracy, ethnic diversity, and economic development. These dynamics shape the political landscape and policy priorities, as governments strive to promote stability, inclusivity, and sustainable development in their respective countries. It is important to recognize that sociopolitical dynamics can vary significantly across different countries in the region, reflecting unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts (Murton, 2019)

Religious beliefs encompass a broad range of individual and collective convictions related to the divine, supernatural, and ultimate meaning. They involve faith, rituals, doctrines, and moral principles that guide individuals and communities in their understanding of the world and their place within it. As Smith and Johnson (2016) argue, religious beliefs often form the foundation of one's worldview, shaping perceptions of reality, ethics, and human purpose. The influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics can be observed in various ways. For instance, religious beliefs can inform individuals' political ideologies and voting behaviors. As Jones et al. (2017) note, religious affiliation often correlates with specific political leanings, such as conservative or liberal stances, and can impact policy preferences, including positions on issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and social justice.

Religious beliefs can also shape societal norms and values, contributing to cultural dynamics within a given society. For example, religious beliefs can influence views on gender roles, family structures, and intergroup relations. Research by Roberts and Martinez (2018) highlights the impact of religious beliefs on sociopolitical attitudes, demonstrating how they can shape opinions on issues like immigration, religious freedom, and secularism. Religious beliefs often play a role in social activism and mobilization. Religious groups and organizations have

historically been engaged in advocating for social change and addressing societal issues. As Smith and Thompson (2019) argue, religious beliefs can motivate individuals and communities to promote social justice, human rights, and environmental sustainability, thereby influencing sociopolitical movements.

Sociopolitical dynamics, in turn, shape the expression and reception of religious beliefs. State policies, public opinion, and legal frameworks can impact religious freedom, tolerance, and the rights of religious minorities. As Jackson and Anderson (2015) suggest, sociopolitical contexts influence the visibility and acceptance of different religious beliefs within a society, which can lead to debates on pluralism, multiculturalism, and the separation of church and state.

Statement of the Problem

Religion often plays a significant role in shaping the values, norms, and worldviews of individuals and communities, which in turn influence their political behaviors and engagement in the public sphere. The influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics is a significant aspect of many societies around the world. Numerous studies and surveys have provided evidence of the impact of religious beliefs on political behavior, policy preferences, and social movements. For example, research has shown that religious affiliation and intensity of religious beliefs can shape individuals' voting choices, with religious conservatives often aligning with conservative candidates who prioritize issues such as traditional values, while those with more progressive religious beliefs may support candidates and policies promoting social justice and inclusivity.

Moreover, public opinion polls and surveys have consistently demonstrated the correlation between religious beliefs and attitudes on social issues like same-sex marriage, abortion, and assisted suicide. These statistics highlight the influence of religious beliefs in shaping public opinion and policy debates. Additionally, historical examples of religiously inspired social movements and activism, such as civil rights movements, further emphasize the real-world impact of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics. While it is widely recognized that religious beliefs can shape sociopolitical dynamics, there is a need to delve deeper into the mechanisms through which this influence operates. The study aims to explore the underlying processes and pathways by which religious beliefs impact political behavior, policy preferences, and social movements. By identifying these mechanisms, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how religious beliefs translate into sociopolitical outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Secularization Theory

The secularization theory has roots in the works of sociologists such as Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and Peter Berger. According to Berger (1967), secularization theory posits that the significance of religious beliefs and institutions declines as societies undergo processes of modernization and rationalization. Secularization theory proposes that as societies modernize and undergo socio-cultural changes, religious beliefs and practices diminish in significance, leading to the marginalization of religion in public and political spheres. The theory argues that as societies become more rationalized, industrialized, and pluralistic, religious beliefs lose their influence over sociopolitical dynamics (Bruce, 2011). It suggests that religious beliefs gradually give way to

secular values and institutions. Secularization theory is relevant to understanding the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics because it provides a framework for examining how secularization processes impact the role and influence of religion in shaping political ideologies, policy decisions, and social values.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory was developed by sociologists John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald in the 1970s. McCarthy and Zald (1977) propose that resource mobilization theory offers a framework for analyzing the ways in which social movements, including those influenced by religious beliefs, mobilize resources to achieve political and social goals. Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the role of social, political, and economic resources in shaping social movements and their impact on sociopolitical dynamics. It argues that religious beliefs and organizations can mobilize resources such as funding, networks, and human capital to influence political agendas and societal changes (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The theory highlights the importance of resource availability, strategic planning, and collective action in facilitating the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics. Resource mobilization theory helps in understanding how religious beliefs and organizations mobilize resources to engage in political activities, advocacy, and social movements. It provides insights into the mechanisms through which religious actors can shape sociopolitical dynamics.

Political Theology Theory

Political theology is a concept that has been explored by various scholars, including Carl Schmitt, Eric Voegelin, and Jürgen Habermas. Political theology explores the intersections between religious beliefs and political power. It examines how religious ideas, doctrines, and symbols influence political ideologies, policies, and structures. Political theology posits that religious beliefs can have a profound impact on sociopolitical dynamics by shaping collective identities, legitimizing political authority, and influencing decision-making processes (Molnar, 2018). It highlights the entanglement of religious and political realms and the ways in which religious beliefs inform and are informed by political power. According to Molnar (2018), political theology explores the interplay between religious beliefs and political power, shedding light on the ways in which religion influences sociopolitical dynamics and the entanglement of religious and political realms. Political theology provides a theoretical framework for understanding the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics. It explores the complex relationship between religion and politics, shedding light on the role of religious ideas in shaping political ideologies, governance systems, and policy-making processes.

Empirical Review

Blais & Bain (2014) examined the relationship between religious beliefs and political participation across different countries. The study employs a quantitative analysis using cross-national survey data. It examines the influence of religious beliefs on various forms of political participation, such as voting, attending political meetings, and engaging in political discussions. The study finds that individuals with stronger religious beliefs are more likely to engage in political participation activities. This relationship holds across different countries and religious traditions. The findings suggest that religious organizations can play a significant role in promoting political engagement among their members. Policymakers should consider the potential influence of

religious beliefs when designing strategies to enhance citizen participation in democratic processes.

Davidov & Evans (2019) examined the influence of religious beliefs on public opinion regarding social issues, such as abortion, same sex marriage and gender equality. The study utilizes a comparative analysis of cross-national survey data from multiple countries. It investigates the association between religious beliefs and attitudes towards social issues. The study reveals that individuals with stronger religious beliefs are more likely to hold conservative views on social issues. Religious beliefs have a significant influence on shaping public opinion, particularly in countries with high levels of religious adherence. Policymakers and advocates for social change need to consider the role of religious beliefs in public opinion formation. Building inclusive dialogues and understanding diverse perspectives can foster constructive engagement on social issues.

Chapman & Bartram (2015) investigated the relationship between religious beliefs, trust and social cohesion within a society. The study employs a national survey methodology to collect data on religious beliefs, trust in others, and perceptions of social cohesion. It utilizes statistical analysis to examine the associations between these variables. The study finds that individuals with stronger religious beliefs are more likely to report higher levels of trust in others and perceive greater social cohesion within their communities. This relationship remains significant even after controlling for various demographic and socio-economic factors. Promoting religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue can enhance social cohesion and trust within diverse societies. Efforts to foster understanding and cooperation among individuals with different religious beliefs can contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive society.

Djupe & Gilbert (2018) examined the influence of religious beliefs on political participation in a diverse society. The study utilized a quantitative survey methodology, collecting data from a representative sample of individuals across different religious affiliations. The survey included questions related to religious beliefs, political attitudes, and participation in political activities. The study found that individuals with strong religious beliefs were more likely to engage in political activities such as voting, attending political rallies, and contacting elected officials. Religious beliefs also influenced political attitudes, with certain religious groups showing greater support for specific policies and candidates. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing the role of religious beliefs in shaping sociopolitical dynamics. Policymakers and political leaders should be attentive to religious diversity and engage in inclusive approaches that respect different religious perspectives.

Anderson (2016) explored the impact of religious beliefs on social attitudes and behaviours regarding gender roles in a specific religious community. The research employed qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and participant observation, within a specific religious community known for its conservative religious beliefs. The study examined how religious teachings and interpretations shaped individuals' perceptions and behaviors related to gender roles. The study found that religious beliefs strongly influenced attitudes toward gender roles, emphasizing traditional gender norms and expectations. These beliefs were reflected in practices such as women's limited participation in leadership roles and strict adherence to gender-specific roles within families. The findings underscore the need for ongoing dialogue and critical examination of the intersection of religious beliefs, gender, and social attitudes. Efforts should be

made to promote gender equality within religious communities, challenging and reinterpreting traditional religious teachings in light of evolving social norms.

Shepherd & Poropat (2017) investigated the influence of religious beliefs on public opinion regarding immigration policies and attitudes towards immigrants. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The survey collected data on religious affiliation, religious beliefs, and attitudes toward immigration, while the interviews provided in-depth insights into the role of religious beliefs in shaping these attitudes. The study found that religious beliefs played a significant role in shaping public opinion on immigration. Individuals with strong religious beliefs tended to hold more restrictive views on immigration, expressing concerns about cultural preservation and national identity. However, the study also highlighted variations among religious groups, with some expressing more inclusive and compassionate attitudes toward immigrants. The findings suggest the importance of engaging religious communities in discussions on immigration policies and promoting interfaith dialogue to foster understanding and empathy.

Kteily & Bruneau (2017) explored the relationship between religious beliefs and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights in a diverse society. The research utilized a survey methodology, collecting data on religious beliefs, personal religiosity, and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights. The study included participants from different religious backgrounds, including conservative, moderate, and progressive affiliations. The study found that religious beliefs strongly influenced attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights, with individuals adhering to more conservative religious beliefs expressing less support for LGBTQ+ rights and equality. However, the study also revealed a nuanced picture, with some individuals within religious communities expressing more inclusive attitudes. The findings highlight the importance of fostering dialogue and understanding between religious communities and LGBTQ+ advocacy groups. Promoting education and awareness about the diversity of religious perspectives can contribute to greater acceptance and support for LGBTQ+ rights.

Wood & Hart (2018) examined the impact of religious beliefs on social activism and engagement in social justice movements. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with individuals involved in social justice movements. The research explored the relationship between religious beliefs, values, and motivations for social activism. The study found that religious beliefs played a significant role in inspiring individuals to engage in social justice activism. Religious teachings and values, such as compassion, justice, and equality, motivated individuals to work for social change. Religious communities provided spaces for collective action and support for social justice causes. The findings underscore the potential for religious communities to serve as catalysts for social change. Encouraging interfaith collaborations and promoting religious teachings that emphasize social justice can enhance the impact of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics.

Dunlap & McCright (2019) explored the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes toward environmental protection and sustainability practices. The research employed a quantitative survey methodology, collecting data on religious beliefs, environmental attitudes, and engagement in pro-environmental behaviors. The study included participants from different religious backgrounds. The study found that religious beliefs had a significant impact on attitudes toward environmental protection. Individuals with strong religious beliefs often expressed a sense of stewardship and

responsibility toward the environment. However, the study also highlighted variations among religious groups, with some exhibiting more pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors than others. The findings emphasize the potential of religious communities as allies in environmental sustainability efforts. Encouraging environmental education within religious contexts and highlighting the connections between religious teachings and environmental stewardship can contribute to broader societal efforts toward sustainability.

Ecklund, Scheitle, Peifer & Bolger (2018) examined the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes toward scientific knowledge and scientific literacy. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews. The survey collected data on religious beliefs, attitudes toward scientific knowledge, and perceived conflicts between religion and science. The interviews provided in-depth insights into individuals' experiences with the intersection of religious beliefs and scientific understanding. The study found that religious beliefs had varying effects on attitudes toward scientific knowledge. While some individuals perceived conflicts between their religious beliefs and certain scientific concepts, others viewed science and religion as complementary. The study also revealed that scientific literacy was not necessarily compromised by strong religious beliefs. The findings suggest the importance of fostering dialogue and promoting a better understanding of the compatibility between religious beliefs and scientific knowledge. Encouraging science education within religious contexts and emphasizing the harmony between science and religion can contribute to improved sociopolitical dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

FINDINGS

Our study presented both a knowledge and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Dunlap, R. E., & McCright, A. M. (2019) explored the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes toward environmental protection and sustainability practices. The research employed a quantitative survey methodology, collecting data on religious beliefs, environmental attitudes, and engagement in pro-environmental behaviors. The study found that religious beliefs had a significant impact on attitudes toward environmental protection. Individuals with strong religious beliefs often expressed a sense of stewardship and responsibility toward the environment. However, the study also highlighted variations among religious groups, with some exhibiting more pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors than others. Our study on the other hand, focused on the analysis of the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics.

Secondly, in their study on the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes toward environmental protection and sustainability practices, Dunlap, R. E., & McCright, A. M. (2019) employed a quantitative survey methodology in collecting their data whereas our current study adopted a desktop research method.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics is a significant and complex phenomenon, as evidenced by the empirical studies reviewed. Religious beliefs have been found to shape political participation, attitudes toward gender roles, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, social activism, and environmental attitudes. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the interplay between religion and sociopolitical dynamics and provide valuable insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and society as a whole.

Foster Interreligious Dialogue and Understanding: Encouraging interreligious dialogue is crucial for promoting mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities. By creating spaces for open and respectful discussions, individuals from diverse religious backgrounds can share their beliefs and perspectives, fostering empathy and reducing stereotypes. Interreligious dialogue can help bridge divides and contribute to greater social cohesion, leading to more inclusive and peaceful sociopolitical dynamics.

Promote Human Rights and Equality: Religious beliefs should not be used as a justification for discrimination or exclusion. It is essential to promote the values of human rights, equality, and social justice within religious communities. Religious leaders can play a vital role in promoting these values by challenging discriminatory practices and advocating for inclusive policies and attitudes. By emphasizing the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs, societies can create a more inclusive and harmonious sociopolitical environment.

Encourage Critical Thinking and Education: Promoting critical thinking and education about diverse religious beliefs is crucial for addressing prejudices and fostering a more informed society. Educational institutions should integrate religious literacy into their curricula, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of different religions and their impact on sociopolitical dynamics. This education should promote open-mindedness, tolerance, and the ability to critically analyze religious teachings, empowering individuals to make informed decisions and engage constructively in sociopolitical discussions.

Enhance Collaboration between Religious and Secular Institutions: Effective sociopolitical change often requires collaboration between religious and secular institutions. By working together, religious and secular actors can address common challenges and promote shared values such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights. By finding common ground and focusing on areas of cooperation, religious and secular institutions can have a more significant impact on sociopolitical dynamics, leading to positive change and inclusive policies.

Support Grassroots Initiatives and Activism: Grassroots initiatives and activism driven by individuals with religious beliefs can be powerful catalysts for sociopolitical change. Supporting and amplifying the voices of those advocating for social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability within their religious communities can lead to significant shifts in sociopolitical dynamics. Providing resources, platforms, and networks for grassroots activists can help mobilize religious communities towards positive change, fostering more inclusive and progressive sociopolitical dynamics.

In conclusion, understanding the influence of religious beliefs on sociopolitical dynamics is crucial for promoting a more inclusive, tolerant, and equitable society. By fostering

interreligious dialogue, promoting human rights and equality, encouraging critical thinking and education, enhancing collaboration between religious and secular institutions, and supporting grassroots initiatives, societies can navigate the complexities of religious beliefs and create sociopolitical dynamics that embrace diversity and foster social progress.

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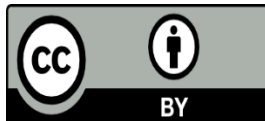
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