

ISLAMIC COSMOPOLITANISM AND MUSLIM MINORITIES IN NON-MUSLIM SOCIETIES: RECONCEPTUALIZING BELONGING

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between Islamic cosmopolitanism and belonging among Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies. As globalization, migration, and religious diversity continue to reshape contemporary societies, questions of belonging have become increasingly significant for Muslim minorities seeking to maintain religious identity while participating in broader social and civic life. Although existing scholarship has extensively explored belonging through citizenship, multiculturalism, and identity politics, limited attention has been given to the explanatory potential of Islamic cosmopolitanism in understanding Muslim minority experiences. Employing a conceptual approach and library research methodology, this study analyzes and synthesizes scholarly literature on Islamic cosmopolitanism, belonging, and social inclusion. The findings indicate that Islamic cosmopolitanism provides a normative and analytical framework that moves beyond majority-minority binaries by emphasizing ethical coexistence, mutual recognition, cultural openness, and civic engagement. Within this framework, belonging is not merely legal status or cultural assimilation but a dynamic process of negotiation involving religious identity and social participation. The study concludes that Islamic cosmopolitanism offers a significant theoretical foundation for reconceptualizing belonging by integrating Islamic ethical principles with cosmopolitan values, thereby contributing to discussions on pluralism, social cohesion, and inclusive citizenship in diverse societies.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji hubungan antara kosmopolitanisme Islam dan konsep keterikatan (belonging) di kalangan minoritas Muslim yang hidup dalam masyarakat non-Muslim. Seiring dengan globalisasi, migrasi, dan keberagaman agama yang terus membentuk ulang masyarakat kontemporer, persoalan keterikatan menjadi semakin penting bagi minoritas Muslim yang berupaya mempertahankan identitas keagamaan sekaligus berpartisipasi dalam kehidupan sosial dan sipil yang lebih luas. Meskipun kajian sebelumnya telah banyak membahas keterikatan melalui perspektif kewarganegaraan, multikulturalisme, dan politik identitas, perhatian terhadap potensi kosmopolitanisme Islam dalam menjelaskan pengalaman minoritas Muslim masih terbatas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan konseptual dan metode penelitian kepustakaan, studi ini menganalisis serta mensintesis literatur mengenai kosmopolitanisme Islam, keterikatan, dan inklusi sosial. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kosmopolitanisme Islam menyediakan kerangka normatif dan analitis yang melampaui dikotomi mayoritas-minoritas dengan menekankan koeksistensi etis, pengakuan timbal balik, keterbukaan budaya, dan partisipasi sipil. Dalam kerangka ini, keterikatan tidak hanya dipahami sebagai status legal atau asimilasi budaya, tetapi sebagai proses dinamis yang melibatkan negosiasi identitas keagamaan dan partisipasi sosial. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kosmopolitanisme Islam menawarkan fondasi teoretis penting untuk merekonseptualisasi keterikatan dengan mengintegrasikan prinsip etika Islam dan nilai-nilai kosmopolitan, sehingga berkontribusi pada diskursus tentang pluralisme, kohesi sosial, dan kewarganegaraan inklusif dalam masyarakat yang beragam.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies are increasingly shaped by globalization, transnational mobility, and the intensification of intercultural encounters. These developments have transformed the demographic and cultural composition of many countries, producing social environments characterized by growing ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. Among the most visible consequences of this transformation is the expanding presence of Muslim communities in societies where Islam does not constitute the majority religion. As Muslim minorities become integral participants in public, social, and civic life, scholars have shown increasing interest in understanding how these communities negotiate identity, participation, and social inclusion. Within this context, the concept of *belonging* has emerged as a particularly important analytical lens because it captures dimensions of social life that extend beyond formal citizenship and legal membership. Rather than merely indicating residence within a particular territory, belonging refers to the experience of being recognized, accepted, and valued within a social community (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Hall, 2013).

The growing prominence of belonging reflects a broader shift in contemporary social theory. Earlier discussions of minority incorporation frequently focused on integration, assimilation, and multicultural accommodation as primary indicators of inclusion. More recent scholarship, however, suggests that these approaches alone cannot fully explain how individuals develop meaningful attachments to the societies in which they live. Belonging encompasses emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions that shape an individual's sense of connection to a particular community. As Yuval-Davis (2006) argues, belonging involves processes of identification, social location, and emotional attachment, while Hall (2013) emphasizes its political character as a site where inclusion and exclusion are continuously negotiated. Consequently, belonging has become central to contemporary debates concerning diversity, citizenship, and social cohesion.

Questions of belonging are especially significant for Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies. Existing studies indicate that Muslim communities often navigate complex social environments where religious commitments intersect with broader issues of citizenship, cultural difference, and public participation. In many cases, Muslim minorities are required to reconcile multiple social expectations while maintaining a coherent sense of religious identity. Corstange (2022) demonstrates that religiosity remains a powerful source of identity formation regardless of whether Muslims reside in majority- or minority-Muslim settings. Similarly, Abdul-Jabbar (2021) highlights the intercultural negotiations that characterize Muslim minority experiences in increasingly plural societies. More recently, Fleischmann et al. (2024) found that religious orientations continue to shape perceptions of social participation, integration, and acceptance. Together, these studies suggest that belonging constitutes a crucial yet often contested dimension of Muslim minority life.

Alongside the growing interest in belonging, scholars have increasingly revisited cosmopolitanism as a framework for understanding coexistence in culturally diverse societies. Traditionally associated with openness, dialogue, and engagement across social boundaries, cosmopolitanism has frequently been interpreted through secular and liberal perspectives. However, recent scholarship has challenged the assumption that cosmopolitan values originate exclusively from Western intellectual traditions. Edmunds (2013) argues that Islamic ethical principles contain important resources for intercultural

engagement and plural coexistence, while Haines (2015) demonstrates that Muslim identity and cosmopolitan openness are not mutually exclusive. In a similar vein, Thahir (2021) shows that the historical development of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world was deeply shaped by cultural accommodation, interaction, and openness toward diversity. These studies point to the emergence of Islamic cosmopolitanism as a significant framework for understanding how Muslims engage constructively with plural social environments.

Over the last decade, scholarship on belonging, Muslim minorities, and Islamic cosmopolitanism has expanded considerably. Research has explored belonging through citizenship, migration, and identity politics (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Hall, 2013), examined Muslim minority experiences through the lenses of religiosity and social integration (Abdul-Jabbar, 2021; Corstange, 2022; Fleischmann et al., 2024), and investigated Islamic cosmopolitanism in relation to pluralism, intercultural dialogue, and ethical coexistence (Edmunds, 2013; Haines, 2015; Thahir, 2021). More recent studies have also emphasized everyday cosmopolitanism and the role of community networks in fostering social attachment and recognition (Driezen et al., 2021; Yılmaz & Sönmez, 2024; Traoré, 2025). Collectively, these studies have enriched scholarly understanding of diversity and social coexistence in contemporary societies.

Despite these advances, an important theoretical gap remains. Existing studies tend to treat belonging and Islamic cosmopolitanism as separate analytical conversations. Research on belonging largely focuses on citizenship, integration, migration, and identity formation, whereas studies of Islamic cosmopolitanism primarily emphasize ethical pluralism, intercultural dialogue, and historical traditions of coexistence. As a result, limited attention has been devoted to examining how Islamic cosmopolitanism may contribute to a deeper conceptual understanding of belonging among Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies. This gap is particularly significant because many Muslim minorities construct social attachment and civic participation not only through institutional inclusion but also through ethical frameworks derived from their religious traditions. Consequently, current scholarship provides valuable insights into minority experiences yet offers only limited theoretical engagement with the potential of Islamic cosmopolitanism as a framework for explaining how belonging is negotiated, sustained, and transformed in plural social settings.

Although previous studies have extensively examined belonging from the perspectives of citizenship, migration, social integration, and identity formation, limited attention has been given to its relationship with Islamic cosmopolitanism. Existing scholarship generally treats belonging as a sociopolitical or cultural outcome while overlooking the ethical and normative dimensions embedded within Islamic intellectual traditions. Consequently, there remains a lack of conceptual frameworks that explain how Islamic cosmopolitan values can shape and strengthen the sense of belonging among Muslim minorities living in plural societies. This gap leaves an important aspect of belonging insufficiently explored within contemporary Islamic Studies.

The novelty of this study lies in its reconceptualization of belonging through the lens of Islamic cosmopolitanism. Rather than positioning Islamic cosmopolitanism merely as a normative ethical ideal, this article develops it as a conceptual framework for understanding the lived experiences of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies. By integrating the principles of ethical coexistence, mutual recognition, cultural openness, and civic engagement, the study offers a new perspective on belonging as a relational and

dynamic process. This framework contributes to broader scholarly discussions on pluralism, inclusive citizenship, social cohesion, and the constructive role of Islam in fostering meaningful coexistence within increasingly diverse societies.

B. METHODH

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytic approach to examine the relationship between Islamic cosmopolitanism and belonging among Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies. The research was designed as a library study that focused on exploring and critically examining scholarly discussions concerning Islamic cosmopolitanism, belonging, religious diversity, and Muslim minority experiences. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the conceptual and theoretical dimensions underlying the formation of belonging in plural social environments. The study aimed to analyze how Islamic cosmopolitanism can provide an alternative framework for understanding the ways Muslim minorities negotiate identity, recognition, and social participation within non-Muslim societies.

The data for this study were collected through a systematic review of relevant literature and documentary sources. The primary materials consisted of academic journal articles, books, book chapters, and research reports discussing belonging, Muslim minorities, cosmopolitanism, citizenship, social inclusion, and intercultural relations. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research topic and its contribution to the discussion of the relationship between Islamic cosmopolitanism and belonging. The collected materials were then organized and classified into several thematic categories, including identity formation, social inclusion, religious diversity, ethical coexistence, civic engagement, and minority experiences in plural societies.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and interpretative techniques. The selected literature was examined systematically to identify key concepts, recurring themes, and theoretical arguments related to belonging and Islamic cosmopolitanism. The analysis focused on comparing and synthesizing different scholarly perspectives in order to understand how belonging has been conceptualized within studies of Muslim minorities and how the principles of Islamic cosmopolitanism may contribute to that discussion. Through a process of critical interpretation, the study explored the relevance of concepts such as openness, mutual recognition, coexistence, and cultural engagement in shaping minority belonging. The findings were then integrated into a coherent conceptual framework to provide a broader understanding of belonging among Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Belonging and Muslim Minority Experiences in Non-Muslim Societies

Belonging has become a central analytical concept in contemporary studies of migration, identity, and religion. It is no longer understood merely as formal citizenship or legal membership, but as a lived and relational experience shaped by recognition, participation, and emotional attachment. In this sense, belonging operates across both structural and subjective dimensions, influencing how individuals and communities position themselves within society. Hall (2013) emphasizes that belonging is closely tied to

cultural identity and diaspora, where identity is continuously reconstructed in relation to difference and social context.

In the context of Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies, belonging is experienced as a dynamic and often contested process. Although many Muslim individuals hold full legal citizenship, their social recognition is frequently shaped by cultural visibility and religious difference. This creates a situation in which formal inclusion does not always translate into full social acceptance. Koenig (2023) highlights that religious diversity in Western societies produces symbolic, social, and institutional boundary dynamics that significantly influence patterns of inclusion and exclusion experienced by Muslim minorities.

Religious identity plays a crucial role in shaping how belonging is constructed and negotiated. Islam functions not only as a belief system but also as a framework of social identity, ethical orientation, and communal life. In many non-Muslim contexts, religious identity becomes a visible marker that shapes social interaction and public perception. Yucel and Whyte (2023) emphasize that Muslim identity formation in contemporary societies is shaped by complex interactions between religiosity, social environment, and cultural context, reinforcing the importance of religion in processes of belonging.

At the same time, Muslim minorities actively engage in negotiating their belonging through everyday practices of adaptation and participation. Rather than passively assimilating into dominant cultural systems, they construct adaptive strategies that allow them to maintain religious identity while engaging with broader society. Abdul-Jabbar (2022) demonstrates how educational and cultural frameworks among Muslim minorities reflect processes of intercultural negotiation that enable continuity of identity while responding to plural social environments.

Belonging is also shaped by urban and institutional contexts where Muslims interact with broader societal structures. In urban settings, Muslim minorities often develop forms of “urban belonging” through participation in civic life, spatial engagement, and community interaction. Becker (2023) shows that Muslim citizenship in urban contexts reflects a continuous negotiation between visibility, participation, and social recognition within what he terms the “open city,” where inclusion is both enabled and contested.

Recent scholarship further emphasizes that belonging is not a static condition but a relational and continuously evolving process. It is produced through everyday interactions, social networks, and institutional practices that shape recognition and participation. Fleischmann et al. (2024) demonstrate that religiosity remains a significant factor influencing integration and belonging among Muslim minorities, indicating that religious commitment and social participation are deeply interconnected in shaping experiences of inclusion.

Overall, belonging among Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies is best understood as a multidimensional process involving identity, recognition, participation, and negotiation. It exists within a continuous tension between inclusion and exclusion, stability and change, as well as legal status and lived experience. Yılmaz and Sönmez (2024)

further show that Muslim migrant experiences reflect evolving forms of communal belonging that extend beyond national boundaries, highlighting the transnational and fluid nature of belonging in contemporary societies. Within this framework, belonging emerges not as a fixed state, but as an ongoing social process shaped by interaction, negotiation, and meaning-making in plural environments.

Islamic Cosmopolitanism and the Ethics of Diversity

Islamic cosmopolitanism has increasingly been recognized as an intellectual orientation within Islamic thought that emphasizes openness, ethical coexistence, and engagement with diversity. Rather than being a modern external import, it is often framed as part of Islam's long-standing intellectual tradition that historically engaged with multiple civilizations and cultures. In the Indonesian scholarly context, Islamic cosmopolitanism is frequently associated with efforts to promote tolerance and counter radicalism through ethical-religious narratives that highlight Islam's universal moral values. This perspective is strengthened by arguments that Islam inherently carries universalistic principles that support civilizational openness and cross-cultural engagement (Zulihi et al., 2022).

Within Indonesia's educational and institutional landscape, Islamic cosmopolitanism is also articulated through pesantren traditions that integrate religious learning with social awareness. Pesantren are not only centers of theological instruction but also spaces where global and local values intersect, shaping students' attitudes toward pluralism. Studies on cosmopolitan-oriented Islamic education show that these institutions actively cultivate openness, intercultural understanding, and ethical engagement with diversity as part of their pedagogical orientation. Similarly, cosmopolitan-based Islamic education emphasizes the importance of preparing learners to navigate plural societies while maintaining strong religious identity (Fathorrozy & Qomariyah, 2023).

From a broader intellectual perspective, Islamic cosmopolitanism is also situated within global scholarly debates on Muslim identity, mobility, and transnational belonging. Classical and contemporary studies on Muslim cosmopolitanism highlight how Islamic civilization has historically developed through intercultural exchanges across regions, languages, and knowledge systems. This historical depth suggests that cosmopolitanism is not a rupture from tradition but rather a continuation of Islamic intellectual mobility across time and space (Aljunied, 2017). Such a perspective provides a strong foundation for understanding Islam as both locally rooted and globally connected.

In contemporary contexts, Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies experience belonging as a dynamic and often contested process. Belonging is not only defined by legal citizenship but also shaped by social recognition, cultural inclusion, and symbolic acceptance. Empirical studies show that Muslim belonging is frequently negotiated within public discourse, where religious identity may simultaneously become a marker of difference and a source of social visibility (Sijapati, 2017). This indicates that belonging is relational, continuously produced through interaction between minorities and majority societies.

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that Muslim identity formation is deeply influenced by migration, generational change, and social integration processes. Muslim minorities, particularly in Western contexts, often navigate multiple identities that reflect both religious commitments and civic participation. Studies on identity formation highlight that Muslims do not experience identity as static but as fluid and responsive to social environments (Yucel & Whyte, 2023). Similarly, research on religiosity and integration shows that religious commitment can coexist with strong participation in wider society, challenging simplistic assumptions about incompatibility between Islam and integration (Fleischmann et al., 2024).

Urban and communal contexts also provide important insights into how Islamic cosmopolitanism operates in everyday life. In multicultural cities, Muslim communities actively participate in shaping social space through cultural expression, civic engagement, and religious practice. Urban Muslim communities, including Sufi-based networks, often function as spaces where spiritual values intersect with cosmopolitan ethics of coexistence and openness (Wajdi et al., 2026). These practices demonstrate that cosmopolitanism is not merely theoretical but is embedded in lived social realities where diversity is continuously negotiated.

Overall, Islamic cosmopolitanism provides a conceptual bridge for reconceptualizing belonging among Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies. It challenges binary frameworks of inclusion and exclusion by emphasizing relational ethics, historical interconnectedness, and lived experiences of diversity. By integrating Indonesian intellectual traditions, pesantren-based education, and global Muslim identity studies, Islamic cosmopolitanism offers a more nuanced understanding of belonging as an ongoing ethical and social process. Within this framework, Muslim minorities are not positioned as peripheral actors but as active contributors to plural and interconnected societies.

Reconceptualizing Belonging through Islamic Cosmopolitanism

The contemporary discourse on Islamic cosmopolitanism has increasingly moved beyond normative discussions of tolerance to a more complex understanding of how identity, mobility, and ethical engagement intersect in diverse societies. In this context, cosmopolitanism is not simply an abstract philosophical ideal, but a lived reality shaped by historical movement, migration, and transnational encounters. As Vertovec (2009) and Horst and Olsen (2016) argue, mobility generates new social imaginaries in which belonging becomes fluid, negotiated, and multi-layered rather than fixed within national or religious boundaries. This dynamic provides a critical entry point for understanding Muslim minority experiences in non-Muslim societies.

Within Muslim cosmopolitan thought, identity is not detached from tradition but is continuously reconfigured through interaction with changing socio-political environments. Leichtman and Schulz (2012) emphasize that Muslim cosmopolitanism emerges precisely through movement and reconfiguration, where identities are shaped by global encounters and shifting cultural landscapes. In a similar vein, Aljunied (2017) highlights that Southeast Asian Islam historically developed through sustained engagement with diversity, trade networks, and intellectual exchanges, demonstrating that cosmopolitanism is deeply

embedded within Islamic civilizational history rather than being an external addition to it. This historical grounding strengthens the argument that belonging among Muslims is inherently relational and adaptive.

From a sociological and political perspective, belonging is increasingly understood as a multi-dimensional process that involves legal recognition, emotional attachment, and symbolic inclusion. Koenig (2023) demonstrates that in Western European contexts, Muslim belonging is shaped by overlapping institutional and cultural boundary-making processes that determine inclusion and exclusion in everyday life. Similarly, Sijapati (2017) shows that Muslim minorities often experience belonging as ambivalent, negotiated through continuous interaction with dominant cultural narratives and public discourse. These findings suggest that belonging cannot be reduced to citizenship status alone but must be understood as an ongoing social negotiation.

Islamic cosmopolitanism provides an ethical framework that bridges socio-religious, cultural, and political dimensions of life (Putra, 2025). Rather than positioning Islam as incompatible with pluralism, recent scholarship argues that Islamic ethical traditions offer robust foundations for coexistence, justice, and intercultural engagement (Fauzian et al., 2024). This perspective is reinforced by empirical studies showing that religiosity among Muslim minorities often coexists with civic participation, social integration, and public engagement rather than opposing them (Fleischmann et al., 2024). Thus, Islamic cosmopolitanism functions not only as a theoretical construct but also as a practical ethical orientation.

Identity formation among Muslim minorities further illustrates the fluid and context-dependent nature of belonging. Yucel and Whyte (2023) emphasize that Muslim identities are continuously shaped by both internal religious commitments and external societal expectations, resulting in dynamic and layered forms of self-understanding. This process is particularly visible in urban and diasporic settings, where Muslims navigate multiple cultural frameworks simultaneously, often producing hybrid identities that challenge rigid categorizations of belonging.

Migration continues to play a central role in shaping cosmopolitan consciousness. As Horst and Olsen (2016) and Vertovec (2009) suggest, transnational mobility fosters new ways of thinking and being that transcend territorial limitations. Migration not only relocates individuals physically but also transforms their ethical and social orientations, enabling the emergence of cosmopolitan outlooks grounded in lived experience rather than abstract ideology. This reinforces the idea that belonging is constantly reconstructed through movement and interaction.

In the Indonesian context, Islamic cosmopolitanism is further strengthened through educational and socio-religious institutions such as pesantren, which historically function as spaces of intellectual openness and ethical formation. Studies on Islamic education demonstrate that pesantren contribute to shaping cosmopolitan Muslim perspectives by integrating religious tradition with social awareness and cultural engagement (Zulihi et al., 2022; Fathorrozy & Qomariyah, 2023). This shows that cosmopolitan belonging is not only theoretical but also embedded in everyday educational practices and institutional life.

These strands of thought suggest that belonging among Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies is best understood as an evolving field of ethical negotiation, shaped by movement, interpretation, and interaction. Rather than being defined by fixed categories of inclusion or exclusion, belonging emerges through continuous processes of recognition, adaptation, and meaning-making within plural social worlds.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that belonging among Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies is not a fixed legal or administrative condition, but a dynamic and continuously negotiated ethical-social formation. The central finding of this research shows that existing integration-based explanations are insufficient to capture the complexity of how Muslim minorities experience inclusion, recognition, and participation in plural societies. Instead, belonging is constructed through everyday practices of negotiation in which religious identity, social interaction, and cultural adaptation are simultaneously maintained and redefined.

The analysis demonstrates that Islamic cosmopolitanism functions as a key analytical and ethical framework that reshapes how belonging is understood in contemporary contexts. Rather than positioning Islamic identity in tension with pluralism, Islamic cosmopolitanism reveals an internal capacity within Islamic ethical traditions to engage diversity in a constructive and dialogical manner. This framework allows belonging to be understood not as assimilation into dominant structures, but as an ongoing process of ethical engagement that preserves identity while enabling meaningful participation in broader social life.

A significant conceptual contribution of this study lies in repositioning belonging as an ethical-relational process that is produced through interaction, mobility, and transnational experience. Muslim minorities are shown to actively negotiate their place within society through layered identities that combine religious commitment with civic engagement and cultural adaptation. This finding expands the understanding of belonging beyond structural or institutional definitions toward a more lived, interpretive, and experience-based dimension.

In its broader implication, this study contributes to the development of Islamic social thought by offering Islamic cosmopolitanism as a framework that connects moral theology with contemporary social realities. It provides an alternative lens for understanding diversity that emphasizes coexistence, mutual recognition, and ethical responsibility. In doing so, the study enriches academic discussions in Islamic studies, sociology of religion, and cultural studies by offering a more integrated and human-centered understanding of how belonging is formed and sustained in increasingly plural global societies.

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