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RELIGIOSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: DOES IT MATTER?

Abstract

Introduction/Main Objectives: This paper explores the impact of religiosity on sustainable development goals across 127 countries. Recently, there has been growing concern about the role of religion in society, as many developed countries have fewer religious followers compared to developing ones. **Background Problems:** Some evidence suggests that countries with lower levels of religiosity tend to have higher quality of life and a healthier environment. However, religiosity should encourage people to preserve both the social and natural environment. Therefore, it is worth investigating if religiosity serves as a driver for environmental stewardship. **Novelty:** Previous research has focused on various factors that influence sustainable development goals, but the contribution of religiosity to sustainable development goals has not been extensively examined. **Research Methods:** This research used multiple linear regression to analyze the current issue, based on religiosity data obtained from CEOWORLD and the Global Business Policy Institute across 127 countries. **Finding/Results:** Religiosity has a significant negative effect on Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, GDP was used as a control variable, and the results showed a positive impact on sustainable development goals. **Conclusion:** The findings of this study provide an implication so that the state in realizing its sustainable development goals together with all its apparatus including religious leaders to have an aligned perspective in executing various programs in realizing the goals of the SDGs.

Keywords: Religiosity, Sustainable Development Goals, Gross Domestic Product

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability Development Goals have become one of the major issues that every country faces (Perkins et al., 2022). Several problems occurred because of the damage to the environment, which happened due to the lack of government monitoring, pollution of industrial waste, and even their own people's activity (Perkins et al., 2022). Furthermore, the impact is detrimental to humans and society as well as to the natural environment due to the lack of human concern for their own environment (Usubiaga-Liaño & Ekins, 2021). Today's societies are also driven and influenced by the religiosity carried in their respective countries (Bentzen & Gokmen, 2023). The aspects of religiosity held by countries in the world ideally lead humans to the goal of the common good and the natural environment. But on the other hand, religiosity is often said to hinder the development of the country (Liu et al., 2018). Therefore, religiosity is a concern in this study.

Most developed countries are countries with low levels of religiosity. The government system adopted is focused on development rather than religious activities, mostly based on rationality, not religion so that it can adjust to the conditions of the time (Bentzen, 2021). It can be seen that Sweden, which is famous for its atheism, has one of the highest levels of development and economy in the world. Moreover, countries with high levels of religiosity are more often affected by conflict, education, and economic problems (Kramer & Edelheit, 2018). This leaves the question of whether religiosity will remain relevant.

There are indications that the Sustainable Development Goals have failed to be realized in countries where religiosity tends to be high, leading to setbacks (Liu et al., 2018). Development in the Sustainable Development Goals is intended to maintain the security, sustainability, and unity of the

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country. However, it is hampered by religiosity. Religiosity impacts various socio-economic aspects because it involves religious activities and the emergence of religious doctrines that regulate every human activity. Religious rules and norms have the potential to hinder technological innovation and science because the increasing role of religion can limit development (Qayyum et al., 2020).

Various studies have been conducted that discuss the relationship between religiosity and development. Various studies have been conducted on various aspects. However, the research that has been done is limited to determinant factors that seek to see their influence and contribution to Sustainable Development Goals, such as quality of life (Sholihin et al., 2022), creativity development (Liu et al., 2018), and state unity (Nuraini & Nashiruddin, 2021). This research presents the variable religiosity as an independent variable in seeing its effect on the Sustainable Development Goals in various countries in the world. The aspect of religiosity possessed by countries in the world ideally encourages humans to good goals for others and the surrounding environment. But in reality, religiosity is found to have a negative effect on Sustainable Development Goals. The purpose of this study is to project the extent to which religiosity can influence Sustainable Development Goals in various countries.

METHOD

Population, Sample, Data

The sustainable development goal index (Y) is obtained from the sdgindex.org website regarding the projected sustainability of 177 countries in all parts of the world for the future. The sustainable development goal index used is the average of the 17 sustainability goals studied. The index is based on the results of observations in the field with the United Nations.

The sample level of religiosity (X1) used in the study was obtained from CEOWORLD.biz with Global Business Policy regarding the ranking of religious countries based on belief in their teachings in 2020 in 148 countries with 370,000 respondents on the basis of measuring commitment to religion, religious identity, how important religion is, participation in houses of worship, and frequency of prayer.

The level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) obtained from the World Bank is obtained in collaboration with various banks around the world by measuring income levels and financial flow cycles.

Table 1. Variable and measurement

Variable	Operational Definition	Measurement
Sustainable Development Goals	The level of development of countries in the world based on the 17 Goals in the SDGs	The overall score of total progress toward achieving all 17 SDGs based on the United Nations (2020)
Religiosity	The level of trust and confidence in the teachings of religion in the country	Data obtained based on the index in ceoworld.biz (2020)
GDP	Country's income level for one year	The index was measured based on data from the World Bank (2020)

Classic Assumption Test

In this study, to test the hypothesis, we will use the classical assumption test to determine whether the regression results are free from symptoms of heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity symptoms, autocorrelation symptoms, and normality symptoms. The regression model will not be used if heteroscedasticity occurs, multicollinearity occurs, autocorrelation exists, and is not normally distributed.

The normality test in this research model uses Skewness / Kurtosis, if the value > 0.05, it can be concluded that the variables are normally distributed. The multicollinearity test uses the variance inflation factor (VIF) if the results show < 10 with a tolerance value > 1, it can be concluded that there are no multicollinearity symptoms. Heteroscedasticity test using the Breusch-Pagan test, if the value is > 0.05, it can be concluded that no heteroscedasticity symptoms are found.

Multiple Linear Regression

Data processing in this study uses multiple linear regression analysis tests through STATA13 to see how much influence the model used. GDP will be used as a control variable in this research model. The data used is analyzed with the following model:

$$SDGs = \alpha + \beta_1 Re + \beta_2 GDP + \varepsilon$$

Description :

- SDGs : Sustainable Development Goal
- Re : Religiosity
- GDP : logarithm of Natural Gross Domestic Product (Ln GDP)
- β_1 : Coefficient Religiositas
- β_2 : Coefficient GDP
- α : Constant
- ε : Error

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Classical Assumption Test

The results in the normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity tests show that the data has met the criteria. So, the data can be used for research in multiple linear regression models.

Table 2. Normality Test, Heteroscedasticity Test, and Variance Inflation Test

Prob > Chi2 (Normality)	0.1118
Heteroscedasticity Test	0.2236
VIF (Variance Inflation Factor)	1.20

The results in the normality test using Skewness / Kurtosis will be accepted if the results show that the number > 0.05. The normality test results show a number of 0.1118 so the data can be said to be normally distributed. If the heteroscedasticity test results have a number > 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the data. The heteroscedasticity test results show a number of 0.2236. So, with that, it can be concluded that heteroscedasticity does not occur. Then the multicollinearity test shows a number above the tolerance limit of 1 and < 10 so that there is no multicollinearity in the data. With these three tests, the data has met the requirements needed to continue in multiple linear regression.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Test Result

sdgindexsc-e	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t
Religiosity	-.2281744	.0241202	-9.46	0.000
GDP	1.640654	.3281293	5.00	0.000
_cons	43.31131	9.155153	4.73	0.000

Based on the table above, the multiple linear regression equation used is:

$$Y = 43.31131 - 0.2281744 X_1 + 1.640654 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

In the regression equation, it can be seen that religiosity (X1) has a coefficient value of -0.2281744 which means it has a negative influence on the sustainable development goal (Y), when religiosity (X1) increases by one unit, the sustainable development goal (Y) will decrease by -0.2281744 units assuming other variables are constant.

While the coefficient of the GDP variable is 1.640654 which means it has a positive influence on the sustainable development goal (Y), if the GDP variable increases by one unit, the sustainable development goal will also increase by 1.640654 units assuming other variables do not change or are constant.

F-test results, coefficient of determination, and t-test

Table 4. F test result and coefficient of determination

Prob > F	0.0000
R-squared	0.5972
Adj R-squared	0.5907
Root MSE	6.2779

Variables can be said to have a significant effect if the F statistic is < 0.05 so that the religiosity and GDP variables have a simultaneous effect on sustainable development goals indicated by the number 0.000. The correlation coefficient value R obtained is 0.5972 or 59.72%, indicating that the independent variable and the dependent variable have a close relationship between them. The Adjusted R Square (R2) value shows the ability of the independent variables used to explain the dependent variable in this study of 0.5907 or 59.07% while the remaining 40.9% is explained by other independent variables not used for this study.

Table 5. t-test result

	t	P > t
Religiosity	-9.46	0.000
GDP	5.00	0.000

The significance value of the t-test on the religiosity variable is < 0.05 , namely -9.46, indicating that the religiosity variable is partially against the sustainable development goal. While the significance value of the t-test on the GDP variable is > 0.05 , namely 5.00, it can be concluded that GDP has no significant effect on sustainable development goals.

Discussion

The results of this study show that religiosity has a significant negative effect on Sustainable Development Goals in all 127 countries used in the research model. Countries with high levels of religiosity tend to have low levels of Sustainable Development Goals achievement. The presence of GDP as a control variable has a significant positive direction towards Sustainable Development Goals, meaning that the better the economic level of a country, the more the country can focus on carrying out its sustainable development goal activities.

Max Weber (1904) put forward the theory of protestant ethics which shows the role of religiosity in influencing individuals to work for material rewards. However, according to Karl Marx (1893), religion has the potential to be misused by exploiting beliefs to gain power in politics. Most countries with high religiosity tend to intervene in religion in the political life of the country (Ksiazkiewicz & Friesen, 2021). With this, every policy and regulation are made in accordance with their religion rather than rational thinking. In this case, religiosity has the potential to be used to oppress and prohibit traditional values, affecting education, scientific and technological development, increasing conflict, and decreasing income (Cabano & Minton, 2023). Religion can be used to exploit the existence of beliefs to gain power in the political world.

Religiosity has its own rules and values that are intended to maintain its existence in society (Harhoff Andersen & Sinding Bentzen, 2022). These values and norms are in the form of religious doctrines or prohibitions that regulate human activities that have the potential to hinder technological innovation and science (Abdulla, 2018). Humans become more reliant on and expect spiritual things rather than reality so development can be delayed. It is evident that countries with high levels of religiosity tend to have low levels of Development.

The findings of this study are in line with the following statement, the more advanced a country becomes, the more its religiosity level will decrease and become irrelevant (Bentzen, 2021; Qayyum et al., 2020). When the country has begun to fulfill its needs, it will begin to forget about religion. But the opposite, when it starts to decline, they tend to seek religion. Research by Çağlar (2020) also says that increasing the level of education will also reduce a person's level of religiosity. Where a person will choose to think rationally and freely for problem-solving. So, it can be said that religion is only a necessity when problems occur to control the mental and emotional state of individuals, not to direct

problem-solving. This is where religiosity becomes irrelevant in supporting development. Someone with a high level of religiosity prioritizes spiritual interests and follows traditions that are still traditional so it will be difficult to blend in modern development.

Liu et al. (2018) show that religion inhibits development and innovation. All aspects such as education, the development of science and technology, and the economy are based on religion. Even countries with a high level of religiosity often have conflicts between religions so that their countries cannot progress. Another argument reveals that religiosity plays a limited role in supporting human rights and sustainable development, as more significant are individual values such as self-direction and universalism (Rogobete & Peřan, 2020). While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have offered a new approach to global governance through goal setting, their success depends on the institutional factors present in the country (Biermann, Kanie & Kim, 2017).

The arguments in this study need to be studied further regarding what aspects of religiosity hinder the implementation of development goals. Religiosity has an important role in human life. However, it should also be noted that the country's development still needs to continue. Aspects of religiosity should not hinder or prohibit any form of development aimed at the common good or even not intervene in the political arena. Therefore, religious leaders need to realize true religiosity in accordance with their respective guidelines for protecting the social and natural environment.

Further examination is essential to delve into the arguments presented in this study concerning the specific facets of religiosity that may impede the realization of development goals. While acknowledging the significant role of religiosity in human life, it is imperative to emphasize the imperative continuation of a country's developmental pursuits. Religiosity, in all its dimensions, should not obstruct or impede progress geared toward the collective welfare, and it should refrain from undue interference in the political sphere. Considering this, religious leaders play a crucial role in fostering a genuine understanding of religiosity aligned with their prescribed principles, emphasizing the need to safeguard both the social and natural environments.

CONCLUSION

Religiosity negatively impacts the country's sustainable development goals. Countries with high religiosity are hampered by their religious values and norms. People with high religiosity rely more on spiritual matters, which delays development. Religiosity should ideally encourage people to be more concerned about their fellow communities and the natural environment. The role of religious leaders is needed to set an example and mobilize communities to participate in sustainable development goals. Although the findings of this study provide negative results, religiosity is not something that should be abolished, but rather something that needs to be practiced again it should.

The findings of this study provide an implication so that the state in realizing its sustainable development goals together with all its apparatus including religious leaders to have an aligned perspective in executing various programs in realizing the goals of the SDGs. This harmony will strengthen, rather than negate one of them, this synergy is what needs to be pursued.

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