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FOSTERING SOCIAL COHESION: THE IMPACT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PAKISTAN

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INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History:</p> <p>Received : 18.05.2025 Revised : 29.05.2025 Accepted : 16.06.2025</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Civic Participation; Social Cohesion; Islamic Economics; Social Capital; Participatory Governance.</i></p>	<p><i>Social cohesion is a critical element in ensuring political stability, inclusive development, and sustainable governance in diverse societies. This study examines the relationship between civic participation and social cohesion in Pakistan, with particular emphasis on the role of participatory governance, community engagement, and policy frameworks in promoting inclusive development. Using a qualitative analytical approach, the study draws on academic literature, government policies, and civil society initiatives to evaluate how citizen participation strengthens social bonds, collective identity, and trust among diverse social groups. The findings suggest that civic engagement initiatives—including youth participation programs, community development projects, and interfaith dialogue platforms—play an important role in bridging ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divisions. However, challenges such as economic inequality, political instability, and limited policy implementation continue to hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. Drawing on insights from Islamic economics, the study highlights the potential of Islamic social finance instruments, such as zakat, waqf, and sadaqah, to support community development and reduce socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, the principle of shura (consultative governance) provides a normative framework for strengthening participatory decision-making processes. The study concludes that combining participatory governance with Islamic economic principles can provide a culturally grounded approach to enhancing social cohesion and inclusive development in Pakistan.</i></p>



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A. INTRODUCTION

Social cohesion has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary societies, particularly in countries characterized by cultural diversity, socio-economic inequality, and political transformation. In such contexts, strengthening the bonds that unite individuals and communities is essential for maintaining social stability and promoting sustainable development. Social cohesion generally refers to the degree of trust, solidarity, and shared identity among members of a society, as well as the ability of diverse groups to coexist peacefully while participating in collective social and political processes. One of the most effective mechanisms for fostering social cohesion is civic participation, which involves citizens' active engagement in community activities, governance processes, and public decision-making. Through civic participation, individuals build networks of cooperation and mutual responsibility that strengthen social capital and reinforce collective identity (Putnam, 2000).

In multicultural societies such as Pakistan, civic participation plays a particularly crucial role in bridging social divisions and promoting inclusive development. Pakistan is characterized by significant ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, with communities such as Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baloch coexisting alongside various religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs. While this diversity enriches the country's cultural fabric, it also presents challenges in governance, resource distribution, and social integration. Political instability, socio-economic disparities, and sectarian tensions have occasionally contributed to social fragmentation, making the promotion of social cohesion a critical priority for policymakers and civil society actors (Ahmed, 2004; Rashid, 2015).

In this context, civic engagement is an important mechanism for strengthening democratic governance and fostering cooperation among diverse communities. Community development initiatives, volunteer organizations, and participatory governance programs provide platforms for citizens to interact, deliberate, and collaborate to address shared societal challenges. These participatory processes not only enhance democratic legitimacy but also cultivate a sense of belonging and shared responsibility among citizens. When individuals actively participate in community affairs, they contribute to the development of social capital—networks of trust and reciprocity that strengthen social relationships and promote collective action.

While these concepts are widely discussed within conventional social science frameworks, similar principles are also embedded within the ethical and institutional foundations of Islamic economics. Islamic economic thought emphasizes social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and collective welfare as central objectives of economic and social life. Unlike conventional economic systems that often prioritize individual profit maximization, Islamic economics promotes a balanced approach in which economic activities are guided by ethical principles and directed toward achieving the well-being of the broader community. The framework of *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) emphasizes the protection of fundamental human interests—including life, wealth, intellect, and social welfare—which collectively contribute to the stability and cohesion of society.

Islamic economic institutions such as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving), *waqf* (charitable endowment), and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) play an important role in promoting social solidarity and reducing socio-economic inequalities. These mechanisms facilitate the redistribution of wealth and provide resources for education, healthcare, and social welfare programs that support vulnerable populations. By addressing economic disparities and strengthening community support networks, Islamic social finance instruments contribute to the broader goal of social cohesion. Historically, *waqf* institutions in Muslim societies financed schools, hospitals, and public infrastructure, thereby strengthening social welfare systems and fostering collective responsibility within communities.

Furthermore, Islamic political and economic thought emphasizes the principle of *shura* (consultation), which encourages participatory decision-making and inclusive governance. *Shura* promotes dialogue and collective deliberation in addressing social and economic issues, reflecting values that closely align with contemporary concepts of participatory governance and civic engagement. By encouraging community involvement in governance processes, the principle of *shura* reinforces accountability, transparency, and public trust in institutions.

In Pakistan, where Islamic values form an important part of the country's constitutional and social identity, integrating Islamic economic principles with civic participation initiatives may provide a culturally grounded framework for strengthening social cohesion. Religious institutions, charitable organizations, and community networks often play significant roles in mobilizing resources and supporting community welfare initiatives. These institutions can complement government policies aimed at promoting inclusive development and participatory governance.

Despite the potential synergy between civic participation and Islamic economic principles, significant challenges remain. Weak institutional capacity, gaps in policy implementation, and persistent socio-economic inequalities often limit the effectiveness of community development initiatives. Moreover, sectarian divisions and political polarization can undermine efforts to build inclusive and cohesive societies. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates participatory governance mechanisms, inclusive economic policies, and culturally relevant ethical frameworks.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between civic participation and social cohesion in Pakistan, while exploring the potential contribution of Islamic economic principles to strengthening community engagement and inclusive development. By analyzing government policies, civil society initiatives, and Islamic social finance mechanisms, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how participatory governance and Islamic economic ethics can jointly contribute to the development of a more cohesive and resilient society.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of social cohesion has attracted considerable attention in sociological, political, and economic literature, particularly in relation to governance, development, and social stability in diverse societies. Social cohesion generally refers to the degree of solidarity, trust, and shared identity among members of a society, as well as the strength of relationships that bind individuals together within a collective

social structure (Chan et al., 2006; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Scholars argue that socially cohesive societies tend to demonstrate stronger institutional legitimacy, higher levels of civic participation, and greater resilience to social and economic shocks (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Dragolov et al., 2016). The theoretical foundations of social cohesion can be traced to classical sociological thought, particularly the work of Durkheim (1893/1984), who emphasized the importance of social solidarity in maintaining stability and preventing fragmentation in complex societies.

A major theoretical framework for understanding social cohesion is the concept of social capital, which refers to networks of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation that facilitate collective action within communities. Coleman (1988) describes social capital as a resource embedded within social relations that enables individuals to achieve shared objectives. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) highlights that social capital arises from durable networks of relationships that provide access to economic and social resources. Putnam (1993, 2000) further expanded this concept by arguing that civic engagement—through participation in community organizations, voluntary associations, and democratic institutions—creates networks of trust and cooperation that strengthen democratic governance and social cohesion. Communities characterized by high levels of civic engagement often exhibit stronger interpersonal trust and more effective collective problem-solving.

Civic participation is therefore widely recognized as a critical mechanism for promoting democratic governance and inclusive development. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) argue that participation in civic and political activities enables citizens to influence decision-making processes while simultaneously strengthening their sense of belonging and political efficacy. Pateman (1970) also argues that participatory democracy empowers citizens by encouraging them to actively engage in governance. Contemporary governance research further emphasizes that participatory institutions such as community forums, local councils, and participatory budgeting initiatives can enhance transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in governance systems (Fung & Wright, 2003).

Beyond political participation, civic engagement also contributes to the development of collective identity and social trust, both of which are essential elements of social cohesion. Fukuyama (1995) argues that trust functions as a foundational element of social order, enabling individuals and institutions to cooperate effectively for mutual benefit. Trust-based relationships reduce transaction costs, facilitate economic collaboration, and create a stable environment for social and economic development. Dalton (2008) further observes that modern citizenship increasingly emphasizes active engagement in community activities and civil society initiatives, which strengthen democratic culture and social solidarity.

The relationship between diversity and social cohesion, however, remains a topic of ongoing debate. Some scholars suggest that ethnic and cultural diversity may weaken social cohesion by reducing trust and increasing competition over public resources (Alesina, Baqir, & Easterly, 1999; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005). Fearon (2003) similarly notes that ethnically fragmented societies often face challenges in building stable political institutions. Conversely, other scholars argue that diversity can foster creativity, innovation, and cultural enrichment when supported by inclusive institutions and participatory governance frameworks (Brubaker, 2004; Varshney, 2002). Varshney (2002) specifically emphasizes that civic networks

connecting different ethnic and religious communities can reduce the likelihood of intergroup conflict and strengthen social cohesion.

Within this broader discussion, the role of civil society organizations has been widely recognized as central to promoting civic participation and social integration. Civil society refers to the sphere of voluntary organizations, community groups, and non-governmental institutions that operate between the state and the market (Edwards, 2014). These organizations often facilitate dialogue, advocate for marginalized communities, and implement grassroots development programs. Salamon and Anheier (1997) highlight that nonprofit organizations contribute to social cohesion by addressing social inequalities and strengthening community engagement. Similarly, Lewis (2001) emphasizes that NGOs frequently act as intermediaries between citizens and governments, enabling marginalized communities to participate more actively in development processes.

Community-driven development initiatives also play an important role in fostering social cohesion. Uphoff (1993) argues that grassroots participation encourages communities to collaborate in addressing shared challenges such as poverty, education, and healthcare. Mansuri and Rao (2013) further demonstrate that participatory development programs can enhance governance outcomes by increasing accountability and strengthening citizen involvement in policy implementation.

While these theoretical perspectives largely emerge from Western social science traditions, similar principles can also be found within the framework of Islamic economics, which emphasizes social justice, collective welfare, and ethical economic behavior. Islamic economic thought views economic activities not merely as mechanisms for profit generation but as instruments for achieving social balance and community well-being. Central to Islamic economics is the concept of *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of Islamic law), which seeks to protect and promote fundamental human values, including justice, welfare, and social harmony (Chapra, 2008; Kamali, 2010).

Islamic economic principles place strong emphasis on social solidarity and mutual responsibility, which directly relate to the concept of social cohesion. Institutions such as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving), *waqf* (charitable endowments), and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) function as mechanisms for redistributing wealth and supporting vulnerable members of society. These instruments are designed to reduce economic inequality and strengthen social bonds within communities (Kahf, 1999; Hassan & Khan, 2007). From this perspective, civic participation in charitable activities and community welfare initiatives represents an essential component of Islamic socio-economic ethics.

Furthermore, Islamic economics emphasizes participatory governance and collective decision-making, often referred to as *shura* (consultation). The principle of *shura* encourages inclusive participation in governance processes and promotes dialogue among community members in addressing social and economic issues. Scholars argue that this participatory principle aligns closely with modern concepts of deliberative democracy and participatory governance (Chapra, 2008; Askari, Iqbal, & Mirakhor, 2015). In societies where Islamic values influence social and political institutions, these principles can provide a normative foundation for strengthening civic engagement and social cohesion.

In Pakistan, integrating Islamic socio-economic principles with participatory governance frameworks presents a unique opportunity to strengthen social cohesion. Pakistan's constitutional and political identity is closely linked to Islamic values, which emphasize justice, compassion, and collective welfare. As a result, community-based charitable organizations, religious institutions, and faith-based initiatives often play an important role in promoting social solidarity and supporting vulnerable populations. These initiatives can complement formal government policies aimed at promoting inclusive development and civic participation.

However, the literature also highlights several challenges in translating Islamic economic principles into effective policy frameworks. Economic inequality, political instability, and institutional weaknesses often limit the effectiveness of social welfare programs and participatory governance initiatives. Moreover, sectarian divisions and political polarization can undermine the inclusive values that Islamic economic principles seek to promote.

Despite these challenges, scholars argue that integrating Islamic economic ethics with modern governance frameworks could enhance social cohesion by promoting ethical economic behavior, equitable wealth distribution, and community-based development (Chapra, 2008; Askari et al., 2015). When combined with participatory governance mechanisms and active civil society engagement, Islamic economic principles may provide a culturally grounded framework for strengthening social cohesion and inclusive development in Pakistan.

Overall, the literature suggests that civic participation, social capital, and inclusive governance are central to building cohesive societies. Integrating these concepts with the ethical principles of Islamic economics offers a comprehensive framework for addressing social fragmentation and promoting sustainable development in diverse societies such as Pakistan.

C. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the relationship between civic participation and social cohesion in Pakistan. Qualitative research methods are particularly well-suited for examining complex social phenomena, as they enable researchers to analyze social processes, institutional structures, and contextual factors that shape human behavior and societal outcomes.

The research primarily relies on document analysis, which involves the systematic examination of academic literature, government reports, policy documents, and case studies related to civic engagement and social cohesion in Pakistan. Document analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within existing sources, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of participatory governance and social integration.

The study also employs thematic content analysis to categorize and interpret the data collected from various sources. Thematic analysis involves identifying recurring themes and patterns in the data and organizing them into conceptual categories. In this research, themes such as community engagement, social capital, interfaith dialogue, policy implementation, and minority inclusion were identified as key dimensions influencing social cohesion.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the research employs a triangulation approach by combining multiple data sources. Academic literature

provides theoretical insights into the relationship between civic participation and social cohesion, while government policy documents offer information on institutional frameworks and national strategies to promote participatory governance. Case studies of civil society initiatives provide practical examples of how community engagement programs operate at the grassroots level.

The research also examines several key policy initiatives implemented by the Pakistani government, including the National Action Plan, the National Youth Policy, and minority protection laws introduced through constitutional reforms. These policies are analyzed in terms of their objectives, implementation mechanisms, and impact on civic participation and social integration.

D. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this study indicate that civic participation plays a significant role in strengthening social cohesion in Pakistan by fostering trust, promoting collective identity, and encouraging inclusive participation in community development processes. Civic engagement initiatives enable citizens from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds to interact and collaborate in addressing shared social challenges. These interactions contribute to the formation of social capital, thereby strengthening networks of trust and reciprocity within communities. As Putnam (2000) argues, societies characterized by strong civic engagement often experience higher levels of trust, cooperation, and collective responsibility. In the Pakistani context, community development initiatives, youth volunteer programs, and interfaith dialogue platforms have demonstrated their potential to bridge social divisions and promote a sense of national unity.

One key finding from the analysis is that civic participation strengthens collective identity and social belonging. Participation in local community activities, such as volunteer initiatives, neighborhood development projects, and cultural programs, creates opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to interact and cooperate. These shared experiences help reduce stereotypes and foster mutual understanding among diverse social groups. In societies characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, such interactions are particularly important for building social cohesion and preventing social fragmentation.

From an Islamic economic perspective, promoting collective identity and social solidarity aligns closely with the principle of *ummah*, which emphasizes unity, cooperation, and mutual responsibility within the Muslim community. Islamic economic thought stresses that economic and social activities should contribute to the well-being of the entire community rather than merely serving individual interests. Chapra (2008) argues that Islamic economic principles emphasize justice, social welfare, and equitable resource distribution as essential foundations for maintaining social harmony. Thus, civic participation in community welfare activities can be viewed as an extension of Islamic ethical values that encourage social solidarity and cooperation.

Another important finding relates to the empowerment of marginalized groups through civic engagement. Civic participation initiatives often provide marginalized communities—including women, youth, and religious minorities—with opportunities to influence decision-making processes and contribute to local development. Empowering marginalized populations not only promotes social justice but also

strengthens social cohesion by ensuring that all members of society feel valued and included. Programs such as youth engagement initiatives, community development projects, and interfaith dialogue initiatives have demonstrated the potential to enhance social inclusion in Pakistan.

Islamic economics provides several institutional mechanisms that can support such empowerment. Instruments such as *zakat*, *waqf*, and *sadaqah* play a critical role in redistributing wealth and supporting vulnerable members of society. *Zakat*, an obligatory form of almsgiving in Islam, serves as a structured mechanism to reduce poverty and economic inequality. Similarly, waqf institutions historically played a vital role in financing education, healthcare, and social welfare services across Muslim societies. According to Kahf (1999), the revival and modernization of waqf institutions could significantly enhance community development initiatives and strengthen social cohesion in Muslim-majority countries.

In Pakistan, integrating Islamic economic institutions into civic participation frameworks could enhance the effectiveness of community development initiatives. For example, zakat funds could be allocated to support grassroots civic engagement programs, youth volunteer initiatives, and poverty alleviation projects. Similarly, waqf-based institutions could finance educational programs, healthcare services, and community infrastructure projects that promote inclusive development. By linking Islamic philanthropic instruments with participatory governance mechanisms, policymakers can create sustainable models for community-based development.

The analysis also reveals that government policies play a crucial role in facilitating civic participation and promoting social cohesion. Policies such as the National Action Plan and the National Youth Policy aim to encourage citizen engagement in peacebuilding, education, and community development initiatives. These policies seek to address social fragmentation by promoting interfaith dialogue, countering extremist ideologies, and empowering young citizens to participate actively in national development processes (Shah, 2015).

However, the study also identifies significant challenges in implementing these policies. One major challenge is the gap between policy formulation and policy implementation. While many policies emphasize the importance of civic participation and inclusive development, their impact is often limited by bureaucratic inefficiencies, insufficient institutional capacity, and poor coordination among government agencies. As a result, many grassroots initiatives struggle to achieve long-term sustainability.

Islamic economic governance principles may offer valuable insights for addressing these challenges. The concept of *shura* (consultation) emphasizes participatory decision-making and collective deliberation in governance processes. Historically, shura served as a mechanism to ensure that community members had opportunities to contribute to policy discussions and decision-making. Incorporating the principle of shura into modern governance frameworks could strengthen participatory policymaking and enhance the legitimacy of public institutions.

Moreover, Islamic economic theory emphasizes ethical governance and accountability, which are essential for maintaining public trust. Institutions responsible for managing zakat and waqf resources must operate with transparency and accountability to ensure that funds are used effectively for social welfare purposes. Strengthening governance structures within these institutions could

enhance their ability to support civic participation initiatives and promote social cohesion.

Another important finding concerns the role of religious and cultural institutions in promoting civic engagement. Mosques, religious charities, and faith-based organizations often serve as important platforms for community mobilization and social service provision. In Pakistan, religious institutions frequently organize charitable activities, disaster relief programs, and educational initiatives that support vulnerable communities. These activities not only address immediate social needs but also strengthen social solidarity and community resilience.

Islamic economic principles emphasize that economic activities should contribute to *maslahah* (public welfare) and the broader objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*. These objectives include protecting religion, life, intellect, property, and social welfare. Policies designed to promote civic participation and social cohesion should therefore align with these broader ethical objectives by ensuring equitable access to resources, promoting social justice, and supporting community well-being.

Despite these positive developments, several structural challenges continue to undermine efforts to strengthen social cohesion in Pakistan. Economic inequality remains a major obstacle, as poverty and unemployment often limit opportunities for civic engagement. Communities facing severe economic hardship may prioritize immediate survival needs over participation in community initiatives. Additionally, political instability and governance challenges have at times weakened public trust in state institutions, thereby discouraging citizens from engaging in participatory governance processes.

From an Islamic economic perspective, addressing these challenges requires policies that prioritize equitable wealth distribution and inclusive economic development. Strengthening zakat collection systems, revitalizing waqf institutions, and promoting Islamic social finance instruments could help reduce economic disparities and support community development initiatives. Integrating these instruments into national development strategies could create sustainable financial resources for civic participation programs and social welfare initiatives.

Furthermore, promoting Islamic social finance mechanisms, such as *qard al-hasan* (interest-free loans), can support small-scale entrepreneurs and community enterprises, thereby reduce poverty and strengthen local economies. By empowering individuals economically, these mechanisms can enhance their capacity to participate actively in community development initiatives.

E. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the relationship between civic participation and social cohesion in Pakistan, highlighting how participatory governance, community engagement, and inclusive policy frameworks contribute to the development of a more integrated and harmonious society. The analysis demonstrates that civic participation plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds, fostering collective identity, and promoting trust among diverse social groups. Through participation in community initiatives, voluntary organizations, and public decision-making processes, citizens develop networks of cooperation and mutual support that enhance social capital and reinforce the foundations of social cohesion.

The findings indicate that civic engagement initiatives—such as youth programs, community development projects, and interfaith dialogue platforms—have the potential to bridge ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divisions in Pakistan. These initiatives create opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to interact, collaborate, and develop shared experiences that contribute to a stronger sense of national unity. However, the study also identifies several structural challenges that limit the effectiveness of civic participation in promoting social cohesion. Persistent issues such as economic inequality, political instability, limited institutional capacity, and gaps in policy implementation continue to undermine efforts to build inclusive and participatory governance systems.

From a policy perspective, government initiatives such as the National Action Plan and the National Youth Policy represent important steps toward strengthening civic participation and promoting social integration. These policies recognize the importance of citizen engagement in addressing social fragmentation and countering extremist ideologies. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends largely on the extent to which they are implemented at the grassroots level and supported by strong institutional frameworks, transparent governance, and sustained collaboration with civil society organizations.

The integration of Islamic economic principles into the discussion of civic participation and social cohesion offers valuable insights for addressing these challenges. Islamic economics emphasizes social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and collective welfare as fundamental objectives of economic and social policy. The ethical foundations of Islamic economic thought—particularly the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, *ummah*, and *maslahah*—underscore the importance of community solidarity, mutual responsibility, and social welfare in achieving sustainable development. These principles align closely with the goals of civic participation and participatory governance, both of which aim to empower citizens and promote inclusive development.

Institutions such as zakat, waqf, and sadaqah provide practical mechanisms through which Islamic economic principles can support social cohesion. By redistributing wealth and providing resources for education, healthcare, and social welfare, these institutions help reduce socio-economic inequalities and strengthen social solidarity. When effectively integrated into modern governance frameworks, Islamic social finance instruments can complement state policies aimed at promoting community development and civic engagement. For example, zakat funds and waqf-based institutions can support grassroots initiatives, youth empowerment programs, and poverty alleviation projects that enhance civic participation and strengthen social cohesion.

Furthermore, the principle of *shura* (consultative governance) in Islamic political thought provides a normative foundation for participatory decision-making. *Shura* encourages dialogue, collective deliberation, and inclusive participation in governance, reflecting values that are closely aligned with modern democratic ideals. Incorporating the principle of *shura* into contemporary governance structures may enhance citizen participation, strengthen institutional legitimacy, and promote trust between communities and public institutions.

In Pakistan, integrating Islamic economic ethics with participatory governance frameworks may offer a culturally relevant and socially sustainable model for

addressing social fragmentation. Faith-based organizations, religious institutions, and community charities already play significant roles in delivering social services and mobilizing community resources. Strengthening collaboration between these institutions and government agencies could enhance the effectiveness of social welfare programs and promote greater community engagement in development initiatives.

Despite the potential of Islamic economic principles to strengthen social cohesion, their successful implementation requires strong governance structures, transparency, and institutional accountability. Effective management of zakat and waqf institutions, for instance, is essential to ensure that resources are distributed fairly and used to support sustainable community development. Policymakers must therefore prioritize institutional reforms that improve the governance of Islamic social finance institutions while encouraging their integration into national development strategies.

Ultimately, the findings of this study suggest that achieving sustainable social cohesion in Pakistan requires a multidimensional approach that combines participatory governance, inclusive economic policies, and culturally grounded ethical frameworks. Civic participation serves as a critical mechanism for building trust, strengthening social capital, and empowering citizens to contribute actively to national development. At the same time, Islamic economic principles provide a normative foundation that emphasizes justice, welfare, and community solidarity, all of which are essential to maintaining social harmony in diverse societies.

Future policy frameworks should therefore focus on strengthening civic engagement mechanisms, expanding opportunities for marginalized groups to participate in governance processes, and integrating Islamic social finance institutions into broader development strategies. Further research is also needed to evaluate the long-term impact of civic participation initiatives and Islamic economic policies on social cohesion in Pakistan and other Muslim-majority societies

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