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The Role of Religiosity in the Face of Globalization: A Cross-Cultural Examination

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the impact of globalization on religiosity, focusing on how religious beliefs and practices evolve, adapt, or resist change in a rapidly shifting global landscape. Employing a cross-cultural approach, the research explores diverse perspectives through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The findings highlight the dynamic interplay between global influences and local religious traditions, revealing varying responses among individuals and communities. While some embrace globalization, integrating new ideas into their faith, others resist or modify their practices to preserve religious identity. This study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities globalization presents for religious communities, offering insights into the ways religious identity is negotiated in an interconnected world.

Keywords: Religiosity; Globalization; Cross-Cultural Examination; Religious Practices; Religious Pluralism.

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Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, globalization is reshaping every facet of human life, including culture, economy, and religion. The spread of global networks, technologies, and ideas has fostered interactions between diverse religious traditions, challenging traditional boundaries and sparking transformations in religious practices. While some scholars argue that globalization leads to the decline of religiosity, others suggest that it may result in the revitalization and transformation of faith, as individuals and communities adapt to changing global dynamics [1],[2].

Globalization is often seen as driving social, political, and cultural change. In terms of religion, it can bring about both positive and negative outcomes. Some researchers argue that globalization promotes secularization by eroding traditional religious practices and beliefs, especially in urbanized or industrialized societies [3],[4],[5].

However, others suggest that globalization may stimulate a resurgence of religious practices as individuals and communities seek to reaffirm their cultural and spiritual identities in the face of global influences [6],[7].

Cross-cultural research on the relationship between globalization and religiosity reveals diverse patterns. In Western societies, secularization theories dominate, while in other parts of the world, such as Africa and Asia, religious practices have evolved to incorporate new global influences [8],[9].

Furthermore, globalization has led to the spread of new religious movements, creating spaces for interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism [10],[11]. However, religious communities may also experience tension as they attempt to balance global trends with local traditions.

Understanding the role of religiosity in this context requires a cross-cultural approach, as globalization experiences and its impacts on religious identity, practices, and beliefs vary significantly across cultural landscapes. This research seeks to explore how individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds navigate their faith in the face of globalization.

The significance of this research lies in its ability to shed light on the complex relationship between religiosity and globalization. As religion plays a critical role in shaping individual identities and societal norms, understanding how global forces influence religious practices offers valuable insights into broader sociocultural shifts. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on the intersection of religion and globalization by providing empirical evidence from a cross-cultural perspective. Furthermore, it will help policymakers, religious leaders, and community organizations better

understand the challenges and opportunities that globalization presents for religious communities and how they can respond effectively [12],[13],[14],[15].

The primary objectives of this research are to investigate how globalization affects religious practices and beliefs across different cultural contexts, providing insight into the diverse ways global forces shape religious life. The study also aims to understand how individuals and religious communities adapt, resist, or transform their religious identity in response to global influences, highlighting the dynamics of change and continuity in religious practices.

Additionally, this research seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities that globalization presents for the practice and preservation of religious traditions, examining both the pressures and potential for growth in a globalized world. Lastly, the study aims to examine the role of religious identity in navigating the complexities of globalization, focusing on both the positive and negative impacts it has on religious communities and individuals as they balance tradition and modernity [16],[17],[18],[19].

This study stands out by offering a cross-cultural exploration of religiosity in the context of globalization, which is an under-researched area in current academic discourse. While much of the existing literature on globalization and religion tends to focus on either Western or non-Western societies in isolation, this study incorporates diverse religious traditions and cultural contexts, providing a more comprehensive and balanced view. Through qualitative methods—specifically in-depth, semi-structured interviews—this research captures personal narratives and experiences, allowing for a rich and nuanced understanding of how individuals and communities perceive and respond to global influences on their faith [20].

Moreover, by focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of globalization, the study provides a well-rounded perspective on the ways religious identities are negotiated in an era of rapid global change. This approach offers a novel contribution to the field by emphasizing the dynamic and evolving role of religion in a globalized world.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach to understand the nuanced ways in which globalization impacts religiosity. The research employs in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous belief systems. Participants were selected through purposive

sampling to ensure a range of perspectives from both globalized and less globalized contexts.

The interviews were designed to explore the participants' experiences with religion in the context of globalization, their views on how global influences affect their religious practices, and their strategies for navigating this changing environment. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and themes in the data.

Participants:

- 15 participants from five countries: the United States, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Brazil.
- 3 participants from each country, representing different religious groups and varying levels of exposure to globalization.
- Age range: 23-45 years, with a balance between male and female participants.
- Participants were chosen based on their involvement in religious communities and their exposure to globalization (e.g., through media, migration, or international trade).

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native languages and transcribed for analysis. The interview guide included questions such as:

1. How do you experience your religious faith in a globalized world?
2. Have global influences (such as the internet, international travel, or media) affected the way you practice your religion?
3. what role does religion play in your society today, especially in global changes?
4. What challenges do you face in maintaining your religious identity in a globalized world?
5. How do you see your religion evolving in the future?

Result and Discussion

The data analysis revealed several key themes related to the role of religiosity in the face of globalization:



Figure 1. Key findings of the role of religiosity in the face of globalization

Analysis of Key Findings

Adaptation of Religious Practices:



Figure 2. Adapting Religious Practices for Digital Engagement

In the context of globalization, many religious communities have adapted their practices to align with the evolving technological landscape. One of the most significant ways this adaptation has occurred is through the incorporation

of modern technologies, such as online worship services, religious apps, and digital media, into religious life. This trend is particularly prominent in Christian and Muslim communities, where digital platforms have become essential tools for personal devotion and communal worship [21]. For example, online worship services gained immense popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic when physical places of worship were closed. These once in-person services shifted to platforms like Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook Live, allowing worshippers to engage with religious rituals such as prayer and sermons from their homes. This shift not only maintained the connection between believers and their faith but also allowed for broader access, particularly for individuals facing geographical, physical, or social limitations [22],[23],[24].

Religious apps have also played a significant role, offering tools for daily devotion, such as scripture readings, prayer reminders, and access to religious teachings. Apps like Muslim Pro and Ayat for Muslims, and Bible study tools for Christians, have made it easier to practice faith consistently, even when traveling or in non-religious environments. These digital innovations offer not just convenience but a way to reach a global audience, connecting people across different countries and cultures. This transformation in religious practice reflects broader societal shifts, particularly in highly globalized societies where individuals often lead busy and mobile lives. While some may argue that digital worship diminishes the sacredness of in-person experiences, the widespread adoption of these digital tools underscores how religious communities have creatively adapted to the changing demands of globalization, making religious engagement more inclusive and accessible [25],[26],[27].

Resistance to Globalization

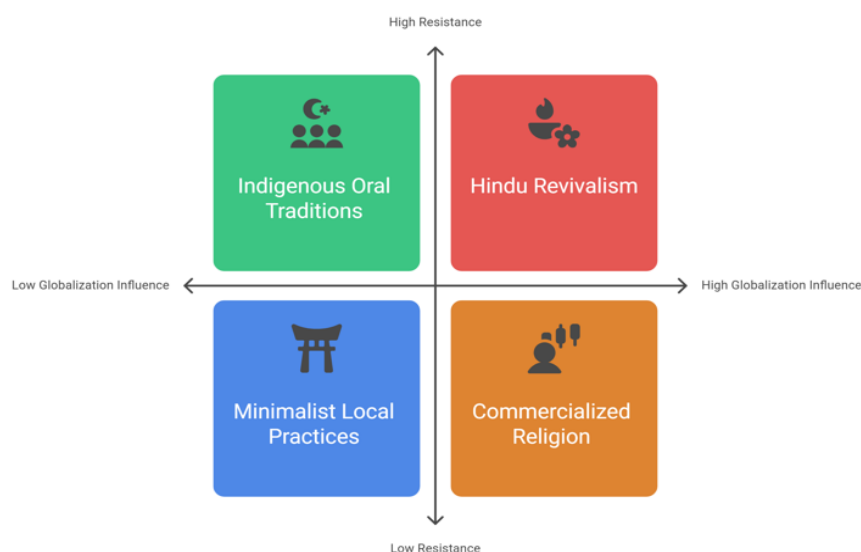


Figure 3. Mapping Resistance to Globalization in Religious Communities

While many religious communities have embraced globalization's opportunities, some groups, particularly in traditional societies or smaller religious communities, resist the influence of global forces. This resistance arises from a deep concern that globalization, along with its cultural and ideological trends, may undermine or even erase their unique religious and cultural identities. These communities often view globalization, especially when linked to Westernization or the spread of secular values, as a threat to their traditions, practices, and values [28],[29],[30].

For example, in India, many Hindu participants expressed a strong desire to preserve their local traditions and rituals, which they feel are increasingly threatened by the global spread of Western culture and modernization. Hinduism, with its rich history and diverse practices, places significant importance on rituals, local festivals, and customs that are deeply rooted in specific regions. As India becomes more interconnected with global markets, media, and technology, there is a growing concern that these localized religious practices may be overshadowed or diluted by Western media, consumerism, and secularism [31].

Hindu participants in this study emphasized the need to protect and maintain their spiritual heritage, which they see as integral to their cultural identity. They raised concerns that the younger generation might embrace Western ideals like individualism and consumerism, which could erode the significance of traditional religious practices. In response, some religious leaders and community members have taken proactive measures to reinforce traditional rituals, including organizing community-based religious events, conducting educational programs on these rituals, and advocating for the preservation of local languages and religious texts central to their faith [32].

This resistance is not necessarily a rejection of all aspects of global influence. Instead, it reflects a desire to protect the authenticity of their religious practices against what they perceive as the homogenizing forces of globalization. For instance, the commercialization of religion and the commodification of sacred symbols are often seen as forms of cultural imperialism that diminish the spiritual essence of faith [33].

In some cases, this resistance manifests as religious revivalism. Many individuals turn to their faith with greater intensity as a way to counterbalance perceived threats posed by globalization. For Hindus, there has been a growing movement to revive interest in Vedic scriptures, indigenous rituals, and rural

spiritual practices, often encouraging followers to reconnect with their roots and reject the more superficial elements of global culture [34].

Resistance to globalization is also notable in smaller religious communities, which may not have the same global influence as larger groups. These communities often place great importance on preserving their religious practices to maintain a distinct cultural identity. Indigenous religious groups or smaller sects may resist the influx of global religious ideologies and seek to preserve practices that have been passed down for generations, often relying on oral traditions, localized spiritual practices, and community-based worship [35].

Challenges in Resistance



Figure 4. Navigating Globalization Challenges

However, the resistance to globalization presents its own set of challenges. Globalization brings opportunities for economic growth, educational advancement, and cultural exchange, and for religious communities resisting these changes, there can be tension between preserving tradition and engaging with the modern world. Individuals may feel torn between maintaining their religious identity and adapting to the demands of a globalized society. Additionally, religious communities that resist globalization may struggle with isolation and marginalization, as globalized media and cultural products dominate the mainstream [36].

In conclusion, the resistance to globalization within religious communities, particularly in traditional societies or smaller faith groups, reflects a desire to preserve the authenticity of cultural and religious identities in the face of rapid global change. While this resistance can take many forms, such as religious revivalism and community activism, it underscores the complex relationship between local traditions and global influences in today's world.

Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue

Globalization has played a significant role in fostering the development of religious pluralism, particularly in multicultural urban centers where diverse religious traditions coexist and interact more frequently. As people from different parts of the world migrate, travel, and connect through technology, cities and communities have become increasingly diverse in terms of religious beliefs and practices. This growing diversity has led to the rise of interfaith dialogue—an open, respectful exchange of ideas, beliefs, and practices between people of different religious backgrounds. Global exposure has created new spaces for religious groups to interact, enabling them to learn from each other, collaborate, and promote mutual understanding [37].

In Brazil, participants observed how globalization has facilitated the integration of various spiritual practices within a broader social and religious context. Known for its vibrant religious diversity, Brazil hosts a range of faiths, such as Christianity (particularly Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism), Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé and Umbanda, and Spiritism. As global influences—via immigration, travel, and international media—increase, these diverse religions have come into closer contact, often leading to the blending of traditions and the creation of new forms of religious expression [38].

One example of this is the integration of African diaspora religions, brought through the transatlantic slave trade, with mainstream Christianity in Brazil. This blending has led to the creation of new religious rituals, festivals, and practices that reflect both indigenous African traditions and Christian beliefs. This type of spiritual syncretism is often made possible by broader exposure to global religious ideas, allowing people to explore beliefs from other cultures and move beyond the boundaries of their specific traditions. As a result, new hybrid religious forms have flourished, offering individuals more freedom to choose how they practice their faith [39],[40],[41].

In multicultural cities, the growth of religious pluralism has also created abundant opportunities for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. In cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, participants noted the increasing frequency of interfaith events, such as religious conferences, joint charity work, and public celebrations of religious festivals. These events bring together people from diverse religious backgrounds to share ideas, discuss common social issues, and collaborate on initiatives aimed at improving society. For instance, one participant shared an example of an interfaith event organized by Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants in Brazil to address issues like poverty and human rights. Not only did this foster greater understanding between the faiths, but it

also led to collaborative actions based on shared values, such as social justice and environmental sustainability [42],[43],[44].

Globalization has also facilitated the spread of global religious movements that emphasize interfaith understanding and cooperation. Organizations like the Parliament of the World's Religions and initiatives by the Interfaith Youth Core have gained international prominence, promoting religious pluralism and fostering dialogue among different faiths. These global platforms empower religious leaders and individuals to meet, exchange ideas, and learn from one another's perspectives [45],[46],[47].

However, the growth of interfaith dialogue does present challenges. Religious tensions may arise as different groups compete for space and recognition in the public sphere. Misunderstandings and prejudices may develop, especially when beliefs clash on fundamental issues such as morality, social norms, or politics. In regions where religious identity is closely tied to national or ethnic identity, these tensions can escalate into conflicts. Despite these challenges, the broader trend toward religious pluralism, fueled by globalization, continues to offer opportunities for deeper understanding and cooperation, provided that mutual respect and dialogue are prioritized.

In conclusion, globalization has significantly contributed to the growth of religious pluralism and created new avenues for interfaith dialogue. In countries like Brazil, where multiple religious traditions coexist, globalization has facilitated the integration of diverse spiritual practices, giving rise to hybrid forms of religious expression and fostering cooperation between religious communities. This increasing interreligious engagement reflects the broader trend of religious globalization, where faiths transcend traditional boundaries to engage in dialogue, collaboration, and shared action for common social and ethical goals. While challenges remain, the potential for greater understanding and cooperation in a globalized world offers hope for more harmonious and inclusive societies.

Religious Revivalism:

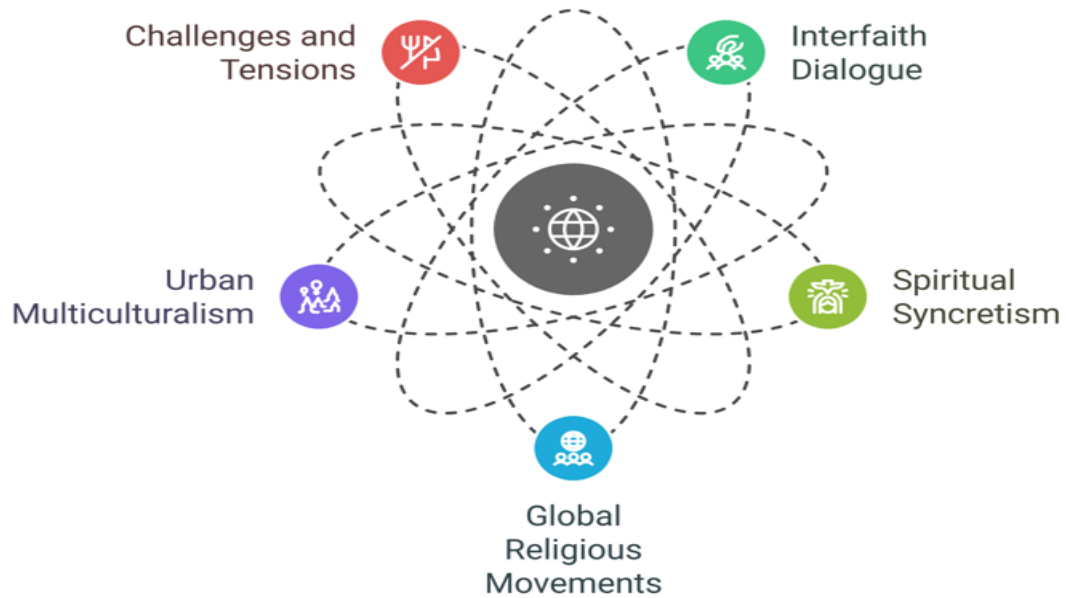


Figure 5. Globalization's Impact on Religious Pluralism

In certain regions, globalization has sparked a religious revival, with individuals and communities turning to their faith as a means of asserting their identity in the face of external cultural pressures. As global influences, especially those linked to Western values such as secularism, individualism, and consumerism, have permeated societies, some religious groups have experienced a resurgence in religious practices. This revival is often seen as a form of resistance to the perceived threats of globalization, which some believe imposes foreign ideologies that undermine local customs, traditions, and values [48],[49].

One of the most significant examples of religious revivalism can be found among Muslim participants in Indonesia and Christian participants in Nigeria. In both countries, individuals have increasingly turned to their respective faiths as a response to the spread of Western cultural dominance [50]. For these individuals, reinforcing their religious identity is not just about spiritual devotion; it is also a way to resist and counter the effects of globalization.

In Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country, the influence of Western culture has often been linked with the rise of secularism and liberal values. In response to these perceived threats, many Muslims have embraced Islamic revivalism—a movement that emphasizes a return to the core principles of Islam. This revival is marked by a growing emphasis on Islamic education, the promotion of Islamic dress codes, the increased visibility of Islamic practices such as daily prayers and fasting, and the rise of Islamic political movements. The resurgence of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia demonstrates how globalization

has, paradoxically, led to a stronger reaffirmation of religious identity as a form of resistance [51],[52].

Muslim participants in the study noted that the global spread of Western values, such as the widespread consumption of Western media and the presence of multinational corporations, has led to a feeling of cultural alienation. For many, the solution has been to reassert their Islamic identity as a way to reclaim their cultural and religious heritage. This resurgence is often expressed through practices that foster a sense of community and cultural solidarity, resisting what some perceive as the marginalization of traditional Islamic values in favor of Western norms [53],[54].

Similarly, in Nigeria, a deeply religious country with a significant Christian population, Christian revivalism has been closely tied to resistance against globalization's cultural influence. Participants in the study emphasized that the rise of secularism and the spread of Western cultural values in Nigerian society have led many Christians to become more devout and engaged in the revitalization of their religious practices. This revival is particularly evident in the expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, which emphasize personal religious experiences, emotional expressions of faith, and a return to a biblical worldview [55],[56].

Christian participants in Nigeria observed that the revival of Christian practices, such as frequent church attendance, participation in prayer groups, and embracing religious leadership focused on moral and social issues, is a direct response to the challenges posed by globalization. For many Nigerians, this religious revivalism serves as a counterbalance to the growing influence of secular and Westernized cultural values, helping them reclaim a moral framework that aligns with their indigenous values [57].

In both Indonesia and Nigeria, religious revivalism is not merely a reaction to globalization; it also reflects the ongoing negotiation between local religious traditions and the pressures of global cultural forces. The increasing devotion to religious practices in these regions signals a collective attempt to preserve local cultural identities and spiritual practices while asserting autonomy in a globalized world.

Religious revivalism also plays an important role in the political sphere. In both Indonesia and Nigeria, religious groups have increasingly sought to influence political decisions and shape national policies based on their religious beliefs. In Indonesia, this has led to the growth of Islamic political parties that advocate for the incorporation of Islamic principles into the nation's laws and governance. In Nigeria, Christian religious leaders have become actively

involved in debates about the role of religion in public life, particularly in relation to issues like marriage, education, and social welfare [58].

In conclusion, religious revivalism in response to globalization reflects a reactionary force against the cultural, social, and ideological pressures that globalization can impose. In countries like Indonesia and Nigeria, the resurgence of religious practices is not merely about spiritual renewal but also about asserting religious and cultural identity in a world increasingly influenced by globalized Western values. For many individuals in these communities, embracing religious revivalism is a way of reclaiming their sense of self, community, and cultural heritage amid the sweeping changes brought about by globalization [59].

Globalization as an Opportunity for Religious Growth

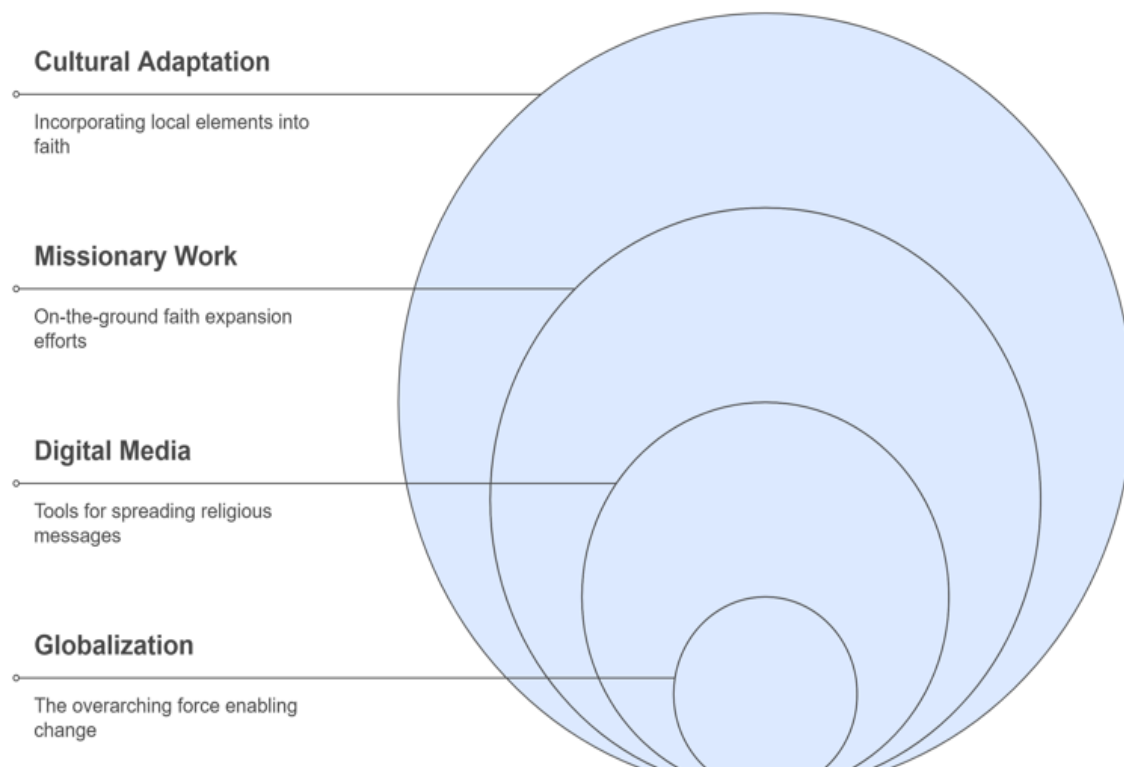


Figure 6. Globalization and Religious Growth

While globalization presents challenges for many religious communities, it also offers significant opportunities for religious growth and the expansion of faith across borders. Some religious groups have embraced globalization as a powerful tool to spread their beliefs and extend their reach to a global audience. The interconnectivity brought about by globalization, particularly through advancements in technology and communication, has provided religious communities with new platforms and tools to disseminate their messages

worldwide. This is especially true for groups that view spreading their faith to new regions and cultures as part of their religious mandate [60],[61],[62].

One prominent example is Evangelical Christians in the United States, who have taken full advantage of the global reach of media, including television, radio, and the internet, to promote their religious messages. Many Evangelical churches and organizations in the U.S. use digital platforms such as social media, podcasts, and live-streamed services to reach audiences far beyond their local congregations. These technologies enable Evangelical Christians to spread their faith globally, expanding their community and fulfilling what they view as a religious mandate to preach to all nations. By broadcasting sermons, religious teachings, and prayer services online, these organizations can reach individuals who might not have access to physical places of worship or who live in areas where their particular denomination is not present [63],[64],[65].

In addition to digital media, many Evangelical Christians are also deeply involved in missionary work, which is an essential aspect of their faith practice. Globalization has made missionary work more feasible and far-reaching, allowing missionaries to travel to previously inaccessible, remote areas. Through partnerships with local churches or the establishment of new churches in foreign countries, Evangelical missionaries can spread their faith, build communities, and often engage in humanitarian work, such as providing aid, education, and medical care. This missionary work has been amplified by globalization, which has improved transportation and communication, enabling missionaries to stay connected with their home countries and religious networks while working abroad [66],[67],[68].

Participants in the study, particularly Evangelical Christians, reported that globalization has enabled them to connect with other Christians worldwide in ways that were not possible in the past. Through online platforms, they can form global networks, share experiences, and collaborate on various religious initiatives ranging from charity projects to theological discussions. These global networks foster a sense of shared identity and solidarity among believers, as they recognize themselves as part of a larger, worldwide religious movement [69].

Beyond the spread of religious teachings, globalization has also allowed Evangelical communities to grow in both numbers and influence. In many parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia, the Evangelical movement has experienced significant growth. This expansion has been fueled, in part, by the ease of accessing religious content through digital platforms and the outreach efforts of global missionary initiatives. Evangelical communities have become more prominent in these regions, with new churches

being established and religious leaders emerging from local communities to continue promoting the faith [70],[71].

Globalization has also facilitated the integration of local cultural elements into religious practices, making the faith more accessible and relatable to people from diverse backgrounds. For example, Evangelical Christian groups in Latin America or Africa may incorporate local traditions, languages, and music into worship. This cultural adaptation has been key to Evangelicalism's growth in global settings, allowing it to resonate with local populations while maintaining core theological principles [72],[73].

Despite these growth opportunities, globalization also presents challenges. As Evangelical Christianity expands globally, it often faces cultural and religious resistance, particularly in regions with strong indigenous religious traditions or secular ideologies. Critics argue that globalization enables religious groups to impose foreign beliefs on local populations, which can lead to cultural erosion or undermine indigenous spiritual practices. However, for Evangelical Christians and other missionary groups, spreading their faith through globalization remains a powerful tool for religious expansion and fulfilling their mission [74],[75].

In conclusion, globalization offers a significant opportunity for religious growth, and many religious communities, particularly Evangelical Christians, have embraced it as a means to expand their reach and influence. Through digital media and missionary work, religious communities can engage with global audiences, spread their beliefs, and foster global religious solidarity. Despite the challenges, globalization has had a profound impact on the way religions are practiced and spread, offering both growth opportunities and the potential for cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

The findings of this research suggest that the relationship between religiosity and globalization is complex and multifaceted. While some individuals and communities embrace the opportunities globalization offers for religious expansion and cross-cultural exchange, others resist the encroachment of global values, fearing that their religious traditions may be diluted or lost. The role of religiosity in the face of globalization depends on a variety of factors, including the degree of exposure to global influences, the strength of religious traditions, and the cultural context in which individuals live.

Religiosity can serve as both a tool for adaptation and resistance. It allows individuals to navigate the challenges of globalization by offering a source of identity, belonging, and meaning. At the same time, it can be a source of conflict, especially when global and local values collide.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complex and multifaceted relationship between religiosity and globalization, highlighting how global forces shape, transform, and sometimes challenge religious beliefs and practices. Through a cross-cultural examination, we found that globalization can lead to a variety of responses from religious communities. On one hand, some groups have embraced modern technologies to adapt their religious practices, expanding their reach and flexibility in the globalized world. On the other hand, certain communities, particularly those in more traditional societies, have resisted these external influences to preserve their cultural and religious identities. Religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue have also emerged as key components of globalization, allowing diverse faiths to coexist, collaborate, and share ideas. Lastly, we observed how globalization has triggered religious revivalism, with individuals turning to their faith as a means of asserting their identity in the face of Western cultural domination.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how religiosity evolves and interacts with globalization in different cultural contexts. Religious identity, practices, and communities are not passive in the face of global forces; rather, they actively adapt, resist, and transform in ways that reflect both the opportunities and challenges of a globalized world. The interactions between local religious traditions and global influences are dynamic and complex, offering both risks and opportunities for the preservation and expansion of faith. Future research could explore how these dynamics play out in other cultural contexts or examine the role of religious institutions in responding to global changes.

Author Contributions

Elias Ahmed, Mahmudulhassan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Shikdar Mohammad Riazul:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Muhammad Abuzar:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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