

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL PROTECTION ISSUES IN THE MODERN WORLD (BASED ON WORLD RELIGIONS)

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the role of world religions in addressing social protection issues in the modern world. It examines the concept of social protection and analyzes the role of major world religions—Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism—in this field, as well as their impact on society. The article explores the theoretical approaches of sociologists such as Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, and highlights the significance of religion in the contemporary global context. The research employs historical-comparative, sociological, and anthropological methods. The article reveals the role of religion in promoting social justice and solidarity and outlines future research directions.

**Keywords:** social protection, strategy of action, social sphere, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism.

Throughout human history, religion has served not only as a repository of spiritual values but also as a significant institution regulating social life. Issues of social protection—supporting vulnerable segments of society, mitigating economic inequality, and ensuring justice—occupy a central place among the core ideological principles of religions. This article is dedicated to analyzing the theoretical foundations of studying social protection within religious frameworks. The research aims to elucidate the influence of religions on the concept of social protection, examine the theoretical approaches applied in this domain, and assess their relevance in contemporary society.

Social protection, as one of the key organizational institutions of society, plays a vital role in regulating relationships between the state and its citizens. This concept is typically defined as a set of policies and mechanisms aimed at ensuring social security, equality, and justice. Social protection encompasses not only the support of economically disadvantaged groups but also the fulfillment of fundamental human needs, such as human rights, healthcare, education, and other essential services. From this perspective, the role of religion in the social protection system has held unique significance across centuries and remains a pertinent topic of discussion today.

The concept of social protection occupies a central position in the political and economic systems of modern states. It serves to promote social justice, reduce poverty, and address inequalities among various societal strata. A historical examination of the concept's evolution reveals its roots in ancient societies, particularly in the activities of religious institutions. For instance, many religions have longstanding traditions of aiding the poor, protecting orphans, and establishing justice, which represent early forms of social protection.

In the modern world, social protection is implemented through state-funded programs, pension systems, healthcare services, and social insurance mechanisms. However, the role of religion in this

process remains significant, as religious values and ethical norms often form the moral foundation of social protection policies.

Throughout history, religion has been a key factor in shaping social protection systems. For example, in Christianity, values such as charity and assistance to the needy have been channeled through church activities to support vulnerable societal groups. In Islam, institutions like zakat (obligatory almsgiving) and sadaqa (voluntary charity) have served as effective tools for promoting social equality and alleviating poverty. In Buddhist societies, monasteries have often functioned as centers for social assistance.

Religion is not limited to providing material aid; it also offers spiritual and moral support. Religious teachings foster empathy, justice, and mutual assistance, thereby strengthening social cohesion. This provides a critical psychological foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of social protection systems.

While the role of religion in social protection has somewhat transformed in modern states, it remains relevant. Religious organizations often collaborate with governments or independently implement charitable programs, shelters, and educational initiatives. Moreover, religious values continue to serve as ethical benchmarks in shaping social protection policies. For instance, in many countries, concepts such as justice, equality, and human dignity, rooted in religious teachings, are reflected in legislative frameworks.

The concept of social protection is essential for the sustainable development of society, and its effectiveness largely depends on the collaboration of social institutions. Religion occupies a significant place in this process from both historical and contemporary perspectives. It has not only shaped the initial forms of social assistance but continues to enrich social protection systems today through ethical and spiritual support. Consequently, the study of the relationship between religion and social protection remains a pertinent research topic in the fields of sociology, economics, and philosophy.

Social protection, as a concept aimed at supporting the economically and socially vulnerable segments of society, reducing inequality, and ensuring equitable living conditions, holds a significant place in human history. Religions have played a crucial role in fostering social cohesion by providing ethical foundations and practical mechanisms for this process. This article is dedicated to exploring social protection issues through the lens of the major religions—Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. The study aims to identify the influence of these religions on the concept of social protection and to analyze their practical manifestations in society.

From a sociological perspective, social protection encompasses support for the poor, orphans, disabled individuals, and other vulnerable groups within society. While this concept is often associated with state policies in the modern context, its roots trace back to religious traditions. Religions view social protection not only as an ethical obligation but also develop institutional structures to implement it in practice (Esposito, 2011). Below, these mechanisms are analyzed in the context of the major religions.

In Islam, social protection is an integral part of religious teachings, shaped by the Qur'an and Hadith. Zakat, a mandatory institution requiring every Muslim to donate a specific portion of their wealth (typically 2.5%) to the poor, represents the most significant form of social protection. The Qur'an states: "Establish prayer and give zakat" (Al-Baqarah, 2:43). Beyond zakat, practices such as sadaqah (voluntary charity) and infaq (spending wealth for the benefit of society) also serve to promote social equity. Islam places particular emphasis on protecting orphans and widows, as evidenced by verses such as: "Do not consume the property of the orphan" (An-Nisa, 4:10) (Qur'an, 2010).

In modern Islamic countries, zakat funds have been established, which are utilized to reduce poverty and finance sectors such as education and healthcare. This demonstrates Islam's institutionalized approach to social protection (Nasr, 1981).

In Christianity, social protection is rooted in the principle of "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew, 22:39). This principle, central to the Bible, promotes the ideals of love and charity. The teachings of Jesus emphasize aiding the poor and supporting the vulnerable segments of society: "I was hungry, and you gave me food" (Matthew, 25:35). Throughout history, Christian churches have actively participated in social protection by establishing charitable organizations and hospitals (Tillich, 1951).

In the contemporary era, Christian communities contribute significantly to addressing global challenges—such as poverty and the refugee crisis—through charitable organizations. This reflects Christianity's universal approach to social protection (Holy Bible, 2005).

In Buddhism, social protection is shaped by the concepts of karma, compassion (karuna), and interdependence (pratityasamutpada). According to Buddhist teachings, helping others improves one's karma and strengthens social harmony. Within the framework of sangha (religious community) traditions, monks and laypeople engage in mutual support—monks provide spiritual guidance, while laypeople meet material needs (Harvey, 2013).

The practice of charity (dana) is a key component of social protection in Buddhism. For instance, in Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand, monasteries often provide food and shelter to the poor. Buddhism's approach to social protection is based on a balance between individual responsibility and collective well-being (Smith, 1991).

Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism share a common view of social protection as an ethical obligation. However, each religion employs distinct mechanisms: Islam relies on the institutionalized zakat system, Christianity emphasizes charity and church activities, and Buddhism focuses on individual compassion and karma. These differences stem from the cultural and historical contexts of each religion (Armstrong, 1993).

In today's world, social protection is closely intertwined with global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Religions collaborate with governments and international organizations to address these issues. For example, zakat funds in Islamic countries, Christian charitable organizations, and Buddhist community initiatives contribute to strengthening social protection systems. However, the rise of secularism has partially limited the influence of religions in this domain (Weber, 1930).

Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism each offer unique approaches to social protection, playing a vital role in ensuring justice and cohesion within society. Their ethical principles and practical mechanisms remain relevant in addressing contemporary social challenges. Future research on the role of religions in social protection should focus on their interactions with state policies.

Contemporary society is characterized by globalization, technological advancements, and social transformations. Nevertheless, questions regarding the role and influence of religion in society remain highly relevant. Despite secularization processes, religion continues to maintain its position as a significant component of social life in many countries. This section analyzes the role of religion in contemporary society, its social, cultural, and ethical functions, from an academic perspective.

When discussing the role of religion in contemporary society, it is essential to first consider the theory of secularization. Sociologists such as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim argued that the influence of religion on society would diminish, giving way to rational and scientific worldviews (Weber, 2002; Durkheim, 1995). However, the resurgence of religion (religious revival) in the early 21st century and its impact on political, social, and cultural spheres have prompted many scholars to revisit this theory.

Religion in contemporary society fulfills several critical functions. First, it plays a significant role in fostering social cohesion. Religious rituals and traditions unite members of society around shared values.

For instance, in the Islamic world, fasting and charitable activities during the month of Ramadan serve to strengthen social cohesion (Esposito, 2011). Secondly, religion regulates human behavior by shaping ethical norms and principles. This function is particularly significant in contemporary societies where moral crises and the diversification of values are observed.

In contemporary society, religion also actively participates in addressing social issues. For example, religious organizations often collaborate with the state in areas such as poverty alleviation, education, and healthcare. While Christian churches and Islamic charitable foundations implement programs to assist those in need, Buddhist communities seek solutions to psychological challenges by promoting meditation and mental well-being (Casanova, 1994).

Moreover, religion serves as a tool for identity formation in contemporary society. In the context of globalization, individuals turn to religious values and traditions to preserve their cultural and national distinctiveness. This process often manifests as a response to social changes resulting from migration and urbanization.

The role of religion in the political sphere of contemporary society deserves particular attention. In some countries, religious institutions directly influence political decision-making processes. For instance, in Iran and Saudi Arabia, religious laws form the basis of state governance. In other countries, religion exerts its influence through political movements and parties (Huntington, 1996). At the same time, even in secular states where religion's involvement in political life is limited, religious values continue to shape the ethical foundations of politics and legislation.

The role of religion in contemporary society is multifaceted and complex. While secularization processes have weakened the traditional influence of religion, it remains a significant factor in fostering social cohesion, shaping ethical values, and serving as a source of identity. The role of religion in modern conditions is defined not only by its institutional activities but also by its ability to address the spiritual and cultural needs of individuals. Consequently, the study of religion's place in society remains a pertinent research topic in the fields of sociology, political science, and cultural studies.

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