

Lebenswelten deutscher Muslime

Religionsmonitor
verstehen was verbindet

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Abstract

Muslim religiosity in Germany is stable and conducive to building trust

The analysis of ReligionMonitor 2013 data confirms existing findings of scholarly research on Muslims in Germany. Thanks to its contextualized approach in surveying the dimensions of religiosity and its comparative capacity with regard to Turkey, the ReligionMonitor offers insight into understanding the influence of Muslim faith on life satisfaction and the relationship between religion and changing values in migration. It is important to recognize here that Muslim religiosity can be seen as a resource in fostering – and not simply as a barrier to – integration.

Muslim religiosity, even when more intense, correlates positively to life satisfaction and managing the challenges of migration. This positive correlation must, however, be understood in terms of the fact that migrants are faced daily with the need to bridge the contradictions between the teachings of their faith and their lived reality. This situation generates among Muslims in Germany – irrespective of their education level – a much higher level of reflection than is observed among Muslims in Turkey. Muslims' grappling with the teachings of their faith does not, however, necessarily result in the mitigation of conflicts in value and orientation systems.

At the same time, there is no indication in our analysis that Muslim religiosity in Germany has weakened over the generations, as it has, for example, in predominantly Muslim countries like Turkey that are undergoing modernization. In fact, the opposite is true. Underlying this finding is a migration context in which we see an intact transfer of values within families from parents to children. This overlaps with the mechanisms of societal modernization and puts the brake on or more precisely, modifies, dynamics of individualization and secularization within the group. This is not a matter simply of delayed modernization. Among highly religious Muslims in Germany, it is also a response to the challenges posed by “Reflexive Modernity” that is, the challenges inherent to a pluralist, highly complex, performance-oriented western society (Beck et al. 2003). Seen in this context, this response is not exclusively representative of an attempt to preserve traditions. The centrality of religion among young Muslims in Germany in particular does not follow a consistent or one-dimensional explanatory pattern. Instead, our findings suggest, several factors are at work in both maintaining and renewing this centrality. It is also safe to assume that different Islamic denominations will feature different patterns in this regard. Alevis in particular are subject to their own unique modernization mechanisms in migration.

In contrast to popular belief, Muslim religiosity in Germany is a factor in cultivating inter-faith trust which, in turn, strengthens societal cohesion. Despite often overblown references to inter-faith conflicts, widespread negative responses to Islam, and the debate over parallel societies, Muslims in Germany express greater trust in members of other religions than they do in non-religious individuals. This finding is noteworthy, as one might assume that being a member of a different faith could have a more divisive effect on trust. This is not true for Muslims in Germany, even in the face of a more skeptical social climate that undercuts inter-faith understanding. Public opinion in Germany may not reflect actual daily experience, at least with respect to Muslims' perspective.

Emphasize social interaction mechanisms not religiosity

Corresponding to current research on migration, our findings show religiosity to be rather insignificant in explaining social structuring processes. This is true also when the effects of social capital are factored in. These findings foster doubts about the validity of focusing on Muslims as a distinct religious group when conducting research on social integration. This

approach proves more fruitful in explaining the relationship between mediated and direct effects of religiosity in an individual's attitude toward integration and social inclusion. Research conducted by experts such as Fenella Fleischmann and Karen Phalet (2012) that finds Muslim religiosity to have an impact on social integration in specific circumstances draw on cross-national comparisons. Their research points to the importance of institutional frameworks in explaining the potential disadvantages faced by Muslims. These potential disadvantages must be placed in relation to the proven, though limited, impact of Muslim religiosity on integration (Müssig/Stichs 2013).

This kind of consideration lies beyond the scope of the ReligionMonitor, which was not designed to analyse matters resulting from migration and minority experiences. Our analysis does, however, suggest that in terms of action theory, assumptions regarding Muslim religiosity as having an impact on social integration and structuration processes in particular are too narrow. The absence of a clear impact on social integration that can be associated with the intensity of Muslim religiosity specifically suggests that ascribed characteristics from outside the community play a greater role here than do intrinsic linkages and motivational contexts.

Overall, our findings support calls to decouple the discourse on integration in Germany from cultural and religious issues. Tied as it is in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to the debate over security, the discourse on integration has focused heavily on Muslim religiosity. Within this narrow perspective, however, there is little room for a constructive and meaningful analysis of social structures in Germany's immigration society. This is an important consideration when it comes to estimating risks to societal cohesion that are posed by

religious differences. Risks would be particularly relevant if adhering to the Muslim faith was linked not only to alienation but increasing social inequality as well. Neither case applies, however, at least not insofar as such deficits can be attributed in any substantial way to Muslim religiosity or the intensity of this religiosity. Rather, these deficits, where present, emerge in large part as a result of social dynamics in which the majority society ascribes bias-based characteristics to the minority group.