

# The Systematic Literature Review on the Role of Faith and Religion for Ethics Development in Society

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## Abstract

The objective of this article is to identify the role of faith and religion in ethics development in society. This article explores the role of faith and religion in ethics development around the world in the five years latest research study from 2019 until 2023. This study used the systematic literature review method to collect the research paper and systematically develop the role of faith and religion themes. The article's research question is formulated by the PICo formulation. The article filtration method is guided by the PRISMA framework guideline. This article extracted the research paper from the SCOPUS database. The review analysis of 29 articles revealed four main roles of faith and religion for ethics development, which are mindfulness, behavioral role, spiritual role, and identity role. The construction of good behavior in society is identified as the most important role of faith and religion in the ethics development of society. Overall, this systematic review provides valuable insights into the role of faith and religion in shaping ethics and civilization, contributing to a deeper understanding of the topic.

**Keywords:** Belief, Civilization, Ethics, Religion, Society

## Introduction

This article is about the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization. This article is a systematic review of the literature for 2019-2023. An in-depth analysis of 29 articles has produced four roles of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization and these roles have been divided into 11 subcategories: mindfulness, behavioral roles, spiritual roles, and the role of identity.

To form good ethics, a person's behavior is important and a person needs to have guidelines and rules related to behavior to control himself in every action he takes. Based on existing

ethics, the conflict with desire can be resolved and further improve the function of the individual in a social setting (French & Granrose, 1995). Ethics is a science that does not conflict with religion. All the religions that exist in the world invite good behavior and morals and ethics is a philosophy that parallels the demands of religion (al-Ghazali, 1985). K. Bertens (2003) in his study on ethics explains that religion has a close relationship with morality. Every religion contains a moral teaching that can be studied critically, methodically, and systematically which is called moral theology.

However, Western thinkers and philosophical figures, reject the role of religion or matters related to religious beliefs in shaping ethical values because some consider religion as an obstacle to human freedom (Karl Marx, 1818-1883) (The Encyclopedia of Religion, 1987). To understand more deeply the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization, this article aims to identify the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Formulation of Research Question***

In this study, two sources were used in formulating the research question. The first source is concepts from previous studies that have been selected through a search and screening process. All the selected articles are related to the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization. Next, the second source is the PICO method which is a mnemonic that means "P" (Population or Problem), "I" (Interest), and "Co" (Context) (Lockwood et al., 2015). The three main aspects have been used in this study to generate research questions based on the concept of PICO. The aspects that need to be discussed are belief and religion (Problem), and variables related to the formation of ethics and civilization (Interest) in worldwide society (Context). Therefore, the study of the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization in worldwide society can be discussed.

### ***Searching Strategies***

In this section, the method used to obtain information from articles related to the role of faith and religion will be discussed and elaborated. Bibliographic reference methods were implemented to find material or ideas about related aspects. Knowledge related to the role of faith and religion can be expanded through library research. Library research methods also focus on finding information through internet sources in addition to book references. In addition, the PRISMA method is used in the collection and filtering of article sources by selecting eligibility and exclusion criteria. A systematic review was also conducted in identification, screening, and eligibility, data extraction, content analysis.

### ***PRISMA***

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting guidelines were used for review in this study. PRISMA defines clear research questions that enable a systematic review that is to filter the articles that have been identified through inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the research question to examine a large database in a short time. The use of PRISMA allows a thorough search related to the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization.

**Source**

The source of the article search is through the Scopus journal database. Scopus is the main journal database used in this systematic literature review to find articles related to the research question. Scopus was created in 2004 with a total of more than 10,000 thousand publishers around the world and offers a variety of literature from many different fields. The method used to find articles is self-selection and it includes inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the eligibility of the article.

**Eligibility and exclusion criteria**

First of all, only journal articles were selected for this study. Review articles, books, book series, book chapters, and conference proceedings were not included in this review study. Next, the search only included publications in English to improve the researcher's understanding. This is due to language misunderstandings and difficulties in the translation process that may occur when studying publications in other languages. In addition, this survey only focuses on the most recent five-year publication (2019-2023) because there are many articles dealing with the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization. The selection of this timeline can ensure the latest pattern of the role of religion in the formation of ethics. Finally, the survey article is not limited to a particular location or country so that patterns of the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization from around the world can be observed.

Table 1

**Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria**

Criteria	Eligibility	Exclusion
Type of document	Journal article	Review article, book series, chapter in book, book, conferences proceeding
Language	English	Non-English
Publication Timeline	2019 - 2023	< 2019

**Systematic Review Process**

The first step is identification. At this stage, keywords for the search process have been identified. Based on the literature review, past studies, and thesaurus, keywords that are close to the same and related to the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization have been used in Table 2. The second stage was screening, where 1979 out of 2179 articles were excluded based on literature type, language, and publication timeline selection.

The third level is the qualification, where full-text articles have been evaluated. After full-text articles were evaluated, 171 were excluded because there was no empirical data, did not focus on empirical articles, and did not focus on the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization. Finally, a total of 29 articles were included for qualitative review and analysis.

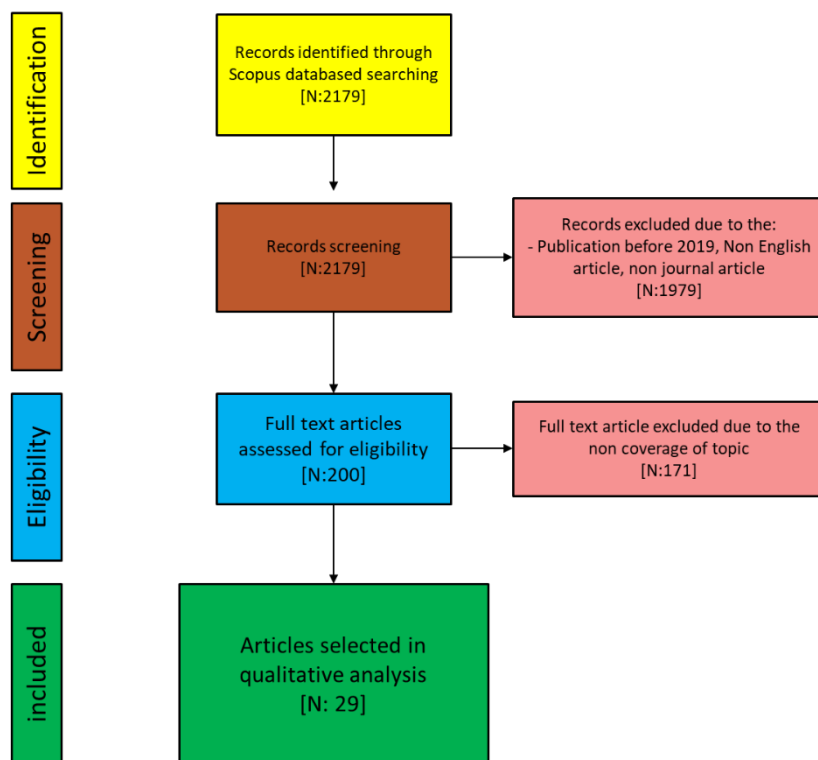


Figure 1. Model PRISMA

**Data Collection and Analysis**

A total of twenty-nine articles were fully evaluated and analyzed. The analysis focused on studies that answered the research questions for this survey. The results have been obtained through reading abstracts and then evaluating full-text articles to obtain information about the article's theme and sub-themes related to the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization included in the articles. Next, content analysis was used in qualitative analysis to identify themes related to the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization.

Table 2

*Search String For Identification Process*

Databased	Search String
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (role AND religion AND (ethics OR civilization)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j"))

**Result of SLR**

In the results of the latest five-year study, the review found that there are four roles and eleven sub-categories related to the title of the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics and civilization. Among its four roles are the construction of mindfulness, the construction of good behavior, the construction of perfect spirituality and the construction of a strong identity.

In the role of building positive mindfulness, there are two sub categories namely perception and awareness. Next is the construction of good behavior, consisting of two sub-factors, namely moral values and attitudes. The third role in the role of religious belief in the formation of ethics and civilization is the construction of spirituality with three subcategories namely divinity, common sense and morals. Finally, the construction of a strong identity is also related to the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics in recent studies. The subcategories of strong identity construction are abilities, beliefs, feelings and goals.

All studies on this issue were published between 2019 and 2023. There was one recent study done in 2023, eight in 2022, and seven in 2021. In 2020 six studies were published, and another seven studies were published in 2019. Studies related to the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics are studied using three research methodologies. Seven studies used a quantitative approach, seventeen studies used a qualitative approach and five studies used a mixed method approach.

**Table 3**  
*The Systematic Literature Review Result*

No	Author	Year	Country	Mindfulness		Behavioral		Spiritual			Identity			
				Perception	Awareness	Moral Value	Attitude	Divinity	Common Sense	Moral	Ability	Belief	Feeling	Goal
1	Nagel	2023	Germany											
2	D'Cruz et al.	2022	India											
3	Coetsee	2022	United States											
4	Ciftci	2022	United States											
5	Oboh & Omolehinwa	2022	Nigeria											
6	Hongladarom & Novotný	2022	Thailand											
7	Zhanaev	2022	Poland											
8	Fazilat et al.	2022	Iran											
9	Osewska et al.	2022	Switzerland											
10	Chin et al.	2021	Malaysia											
11	Lehmann et al.	2021	Switzerland											
12	Zatari	2021	Pakistan											
13	Bensaid	2021	Turkey											
14	Odak	2021	United States											
15	Tatu & Nicolaidis	2021	South Africa											
16	Pettinato	2021	England											
17	Modell & Kardia	2020	United States											
18	Hesse	2020	Germany											

19	Van Buren et al.	2020	United States											
20	Crisp & Dinham	2020	Australia											
21	Nicolaides	2020	South Africa											
22	Khan et al.	2020	Malaysia											
23	Marvinam & Vahidi	2019	Iran											
24	Zhou & Sun	2019	China											
25	Erden	2019	Turkey											
26	Rakimzhanova & Rakymzhanov	2019	Kazakhstan											
27	Elius et al.	2019	Malaysia											
28	Serfontein	2019	South Africa											
29	Reiss	2019	England											

Studies related to the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics are conducted in various countries. The highest number of studies (5) were conducted in the United States. Next, (3) studies were conducted in three countries namely Germany, South Africa, and Malaysia, while (2) studies were conducted in Germany, Iran, Turkey, and England. The rest of the study as many as one study has been conducted in eight countries namely India, Nigeria, Thailand, Poland, Switzerland, Pakistan, Australia, and Kazakhstan

Based on the findings of the study, the three most popular roles of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization are the construction of good behavior (76%), the construction of a strong identity, (66%), and the construction of a perfect spirituality (48%). A less relevant role is the construction of mindfulness (45%).

In the role of building good behavior, there are 2 sub-categories linked to the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics, namely moral values (41%) and attitudes (59%). Next, in the role of strong identity construction, the highest subcategory is feelings (28%), followed by beliefs (24%), abilities (17%), and goals (10%). In building a perfect spirituality, the highest sub-categories are divinity (24%), morals (21%), and finally common sense (17%).

The least popular role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization is the construction of mindfulness. In the role of positive thought-building factors, the highest subcategory is perception (28%) and the lowest is awareness (24%).

Table 3 is a category of roles related to the study findings of the role of religious beliefs in the formation of ethics based on 29 studies conducted from 2019 to 2023.

## Discussion

This study is a systematic review of the latest five-year literature on the role of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization. The concept of religion and belief can be defined as the provision of human life based on a bond between the spiritual realm and the supernatural realm that has power over him (Yusuff, 2015). The concept of ethics can be

defined as a way of thinking about critical and basic moral principles (Bagir, 2005). The role of religion and belief is very important in the formation of ethics and civilization because it is said that moral people must hold firm to their religious beliefs (Tobroni, 2011).

A total of 29 articles were carefully selected and collected from the Scopus database as a source of literature review. 4 types of roles of religion and belief in the formation of ethics and civilization have been identified and those roles have been divided into 11 subcategories.

Based on this survey, the most popular role of belief and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization is the construction of good behavior in society. This is because good behavior is tied to pure beliefs and perfect Sharia according to the perspective of Islam (Zuraimy et al., 2022). Ethics is also said to be a pattern of behavior that is greatly influenced by adherence to religion and belief and as a result forms good behavior in an individual. For example, Rasullah's morals in taking care of one's self such as forgiving, tolerant, patient, fair, and full of love can be a role model and the best example for society in the construction of ethics and civilization (Rosli et al., 2019). Apart from Islam, Christians also practice moral values based on the Bible as the basis of their ethical formation. The Ten Commandments that are included in the Old Testament and the practice of pure morals that are included in the New Testament have become the foundation of Christians for the good qualities that need to be practiced in their lives (Nocolaides, 2020).

Next, the second most popular role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization based on Table 3 is to form the identity of individuals and society. Identity shows feelings or actions that symbolize an individual or society. Religion gives people a clear and comprehensive view of themselves, the Creator, and nature as well as their position and role in this universe (Ahmad Mohamad, 2009). Belief and religion have become a guide in the formation of individual and community identity in terms of abilities, beliefs, feelings, and goals. Identity in the conceptual definition is based on religion and culture (Siddiq Fadhil, 2010). This is because religion is a mirror for every individual in daily life who faces social reality. For example, Islam has become the basis for the revival of the Malay community in every aspect of life such as social, economic, and political (Mahayudin Yahaya, 2009). In addition, Buddhism has a different view that the idea of the 'individual self' is an illusion and it is impossible to separate oneself from one's environment. The Buddha explained that human identity is without an eternal and substantial self.

Next, the formation of spirituality is the third most popular role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization based on Table 3. Spirituality refers to things related to the inner feelings of humans. For example, Buddhists believe that human life is a cycle of suffering and rebirth. However, one has the opportunity to escape this cycle forever if one reaches the state of enlightenment (nirvana). When elements of secularism began to be absorbed into society, social problems emerged and made it difficult for moral formation (Asmawati Suhid, 2006). In this regard, spirituality plays an important role. Islam believes that a lack of basic religious knowledge and a less-than-perfect understanding of religion has contributed to the increase in social and criminal symptoms among Muslim youth (Syamila & Che Zarina, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

This systematic study has identified the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization. The role of religion and belief is very important in the formation of ethics and civilization because it is said that moral people must hold firm to their religious beliefs (Tobroni, 2011). Religion is often the main source of moral values held by individuals and

society, for example, the principles found in religion are justice, compassion, honesty, and forgiveness. Therefore, religion helps in forming values that are widely accepted by society. However, remember that ethics and civilization can also develop without the involvement of a particular religion or belief.

This article is a systematic literature review study. The strength of this study is that it has gathered findings from previous studies around the world on the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization. This study has helped researchers obtain patterns regarding the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization from around the world. This study has also evaluated the roles of faith and religion associated with the formation of ethics and civilization from the most to the least frequently associated with the formation of ethics and civilization. The findings of this study have made the parties involved aware that the increase in ethical values and civilization influenced by faith and religion is not only focused on spirituality.

In the findings of the study, there are four factors related to the role of belief and religion, namely thinking, the role of behavior, the role of spirituality, and the role of identity. The behavioral role factor is the most dominant, followed by the identity role and the spiritual role. The thought factor is the least relevant. The findings of the study also show that this study involves methodological variations, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Thus, this conclusion shows the role of faith and religion in the formation of ethics and civilization, but also the possibility of the development of ethics and civilization without the involvement of certain religions or beliefs.

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