Religion and Social Cohesion in Vietnam: An Empirical Analysis of Community Dynamics

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of religion in social bonding in Vietnam, with consideration of some key elements, like participation in religion, the degree of interfaith interaction, common cultural and ethical values, and support from the community leadership. The information was collected from 200 respondents in Hanoi, Hue, and Hoi An, cultural centers in Vietnam, by a structured questionnaire. The independent variables, such as social bonding, were modeled using a multivariate linear regression model. Findings indicated that community leadership support (β = 0.2218, p = 0.001) and shared cultural and ethical values (β = 0.252, p = 0.001) were the two strongest predictors for social bonding, which confirmed their very significant role in promoting trust and cooperation. The impact of religious participation (β = 0.163, p = 0.015) and interfaith interaction (β = 0.157, p = 0.014) was also statistically significant in a positive manner, underlining the importance of engaging in religious life and interfaith dialogue. The findings suggest that in Vietnam, which is one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries in the world, religion assumes a very important role in fostering community cohesion. These insights could provide meaningful lessons for policymakers, urban planners, and other stakeholders who are involved in the fostering of sustained social bonding through the lenses of community leadership and common cultural values. Addressing these major predictors can lead to building more inclusive and resilient communities in culturally heterogeneous environments.

Keywords: Religion, Social Cohesion, Community Leadership, Cultural Values, Interfaith Interactionp, Vietnam.

Introduction

Social cohesion, the ability of society to foster confidence, interdependence, and well-being among its members, is essential for sustainable development and social stability (Putnam, 2000). In many societies, religion plays an important role in establishing social dynamics, delivering values, and finding networks that connect communities (Durkheim,1912; Casanova, 2001). Vietnam, a historically multicultural society endowed with a vibrant stream of religious practices, religion, and social cohesion, holds particular significance. In fact, the coexistence of Buddhism and Catholicism, Protestantism, and traditional folklore beliefs links strands of Vietnam's social fabric. It has defined the lives and relations of Vietnamese communities for centuries.

Urbanization, economic transformation, and challenges of managing religious diversity call for more social cohesion in contemporary Vietnam. Vietnam's government has long recognized religious harmony as a vital area of national unity, integrated into the policy frameworks and development strategies (Nguyen et al., 2024). However, balancing the relationship between modernity and tradition poses new challenges. Urban migration and socioeconomic changes are testing communal bonds, while interfaith relationships remain a sensitive issue in dire need of

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careful management so as to avoid division (Zanfrini, 2020). However, Vietnam has displayed considerable ability in promoting interfaith cooperation, mostly through the effective acts of religious organizations and community leaders in upholding values and collective well-being (Phan, 2016).

Research on the influence of religion on social cohesion has been widely covered by global studies, with a significant portion developed in Western or mono-religious contexts (Hervieu-Léger, 2006). In Vietnam, existing literature has mostly emphasized historical or anthropological perspectives and provided inadequate empirical analyses on the dynamics in which religious practice and leadership are known to promote social cohesion in multireligious contexts. This leaves a critical gap in the understanding of the mechanisms by which religious participation, interfaith interaction, and leadership contribute to community cohesion in Vietnam. Addressing this gap is crucial to promote insights that would be to the same potential eligible applications in multireligious societies.

This study seeks to examine how effective community leadership and support from religious organizations influence social cohesion in local Vietnamese communities. Particularly, they concern four interrelated dimensions: (1) the impact of religious participation, (2) interfaith interaction, (3) the influence of shared cultural and ethical values from religion, and (4) the contributions of effective leadership and religious support. The focus on these factors provides a practical and empirical lens to understand religion at some level as a potential unifier and practical tool to address multiple challenges within society.

The study's relevance also lies strongly in the contemporary context of Vietnam. As a country that struggles to maintain cultural and spiritual heritage while traversing a quickly changing landscape, Vietnam stands as a classic case study on the strengthening of bonds within communities through religion. This is expected to contribute to global discussions on the topic of religion and social cohesion, but it also has the potential to be of practical value to policymakers, community leaders, and religious organizations in Vietnam. This study attempts to advance scholarly understanding, providing recommendations for future work aimed at promoting social cohesion while addressing existing challenges for Vietnam and its dynamic society.

Literature Reviews

Religious Participation

According to many research papers, involvement in religious activities is often considered paramount in building social cohesion. Participation in religious rituals is community-oriented and further strengthens social relations and collective identity (Putnam, 2000).

Catholicism and Protestantism are organized religions in Vietnam that expectedly introduced a system of community engagement that further enhances social connectedness. Contextually, religious participation in Vietnam has certain cultural and social connotations. Traditional Vietnamese religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and ancestor worship, emphasize community rituals and collective harmony (Taylor, 2007).

In Vietnamese, what is supposed to be and what takes place on the ground is quite different. In Vietnam, the communal nature of these activities parallels Confucian image of social harmony and solidifies their contributions to social cohesion.

In fact, studies concerning Southeast Asia indicate a robust association between religious involvement and social cohesion indicators such as trust and social capital (Casanova, 2001). Evidence suggests that, in the case of Vietnam, what strengthens neighborhood ties and reduces social isolation includes participation in religious festivals and such related activities as prayer meetings and community offerings (Nguyen & Kendall, 2003). The aforementioned activities serve as informal mechanisms for conflict resolution and mutual aid in forging a cohesive social fabric.

Religious participation is a channel of shared values that join individuals in a community in appearance. Dialogues and organization given proper rituals

are fertile grounds for understanding differences, resolving potential tensions, and ultimately enabling the reinforcement of social ties (Fukuyama, 1995). In Vietnam, this communal nature of rituals corresponds with the Confucian goal of social harmony that elevates the role of religion in social cohesion.

Religiosity may also have adverse, conflicting consequences in social cohesion adopted by exclusive religious groups (Berger, 2018; Pettigrew, 1998). In Vietnam, however, this threat is counteracted by the state's tolerance for such religious differences and by its undertaking a series of policies that promote inter-religious harmony (Wahid, 2024).

Interfaith Interaction

Interfaith interaction refers to contact and communication between different religious groups or people. Literature suggests that established interfaith dialogue and cooperation are powerful tools for establishing mutual understanding, reducing prejudices, and enhancing tolerance (Hewstone et al., 2006). When people of diverse religions begin to work together and build empathy with each other, they build common goals on which to base harmonious coexistence (Allport, 1954).

In pluralistic societies, interfaith interaction plays an invaluable role in lessening divides based on religious identity. Studies in Southeast Asian countries indicate that social cohesion is much higher for interfaith-active communities since it reduces misunderstandings and negates stereotypes (Dollahite et al., 2018). Concerning Vietnam, we see that interfaith engagement is a rich opportunity to foster inclusivity and share common values among Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and indigenous beliefs (Chia, 2016).

Empirical findings in Vietnam indicate great promise with regard to interfaith contacts. For instance, Brajovic (2007) shows that communities that exhibited a high level of inter-religious dialogue indicated a high probability of trust and cooperation. Events that promote mutual respect among different religious groups include joint religious festivals, interfaith charity activities, and government-initiated dialogue platforms. This dynamic is critical in Vietnam's cities, where different religious communities often live very closely together.

According to the contact hypothesis(the reduction of prejudice and stereotyping through direct contact between groups), interfaith interactions create conditions for direct contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Through education and interaction, people develop more respect and understanding of each other's faiths, thus diminishing fear and instilling trust. In the case of Vietnam, collaboration among faiths on social welfare issues, such as disaster relief or poverty alleviation projects, illustrates how interfaith interactions reinforce social cohesion.

While interfaith engagements may nurture social cohesion, challenges or complications do not cease to exist. For example, in rare instances, there might be competition amongst the religious communities, and/or differences in doctrine may breed some tensions (Casanova, 2001). However, in Vietnam, the government's emphasis on inter-religious harmony and tolerance, as outlined by its legal framework on matters of religious practice, has de-escalated such tensions (Mekuriaw, 2024). Beyond that, traditional moral norms based on the Confucian ideals of harmony and respect provide a conducive environment for interfaith dialogue.

Cultural and Ethical Values

Shared cultural and ethical values have long been recognized as essential components of social cohesion (Fonseca et al., 2019). These values, often rooted in religious teachings, provide a moral framework within which trust, cooperation, and collective responsibility are nurtured among the members of a community (Ebstyne King & Furrow, 2008). The congruence between individual behaviors and commonly held values amplifies social ties and augments a sense of belonging and unity (Marshall, 2002). Religious teachings stem from a primary source of cultural and ethical values wherein compassion, respect, and justice are core (Reilly, 2010). They instill behavioral conduct that is expected by society, thus propagating favorable social relationships (Reis et al.,2000). Particularly in Vietnam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Catholicism represent principal directives of ethical behavior emphasizing common harmony, respect for fellow beings, and togetherness in ethos (Fasching et al., 2011).

In Vietnam, research has shown that shared cultural and ethical values enhance social cohesion. According to Graham and Haidt (2010), communities that share a strong adherence to religiously inspired values often exhibit higher levels of trust and cooperation. For example, the Confucian principle of filial piety underlined family-based support systems; Buddhist teachings of generosity and compassion inspired communal welfare activities such as charity drives and disaster relief efforts (Cline, 2015).

In Vietnam, shared values also find expression through religious festivals and community rituals. For example, the Lunar New Year (Tết) and the Vu Lan festival reflect profoundly ingrained ethical values rooted in religious traditions, thus providing an ample opportunity for community bonding and collective festivities (Malarney, 2020). These common experiences provide great strength to the social fabric and greatly ease any likely tensions in a community of diverse faces.

Shared cultural and ethical values work as a social contract, promoting trust and reducing conflict in a community (Toukan & Tawil, 2024). Shared values lay down a moral foundation for guiding actions by both individuals and collectives for the good of society. In Vietnam, religious teaching flows well with cultural norms; it promotes common welfare and society harmony (Nguyen, 2016). The interdependence thus created enables it to bolster social cohesion in rural and urban locations.

Yes, while these shared values occur to establish a bond among a group towards social cohesion, tensions may occur within pluralistic societies where people from diverse cultures and religions. Different sectarian interpretations may lead to these tensions (Casanova, 2001). However, Vietnam would serve as a case in which the common religious and cultural traditions merge into a syncretic place (Rambo, 1982), where shared values speak to the interest beyond an individual's religious identities and promote inclusiveness with due respect (Taylor, 2007).

The promotion of shared cultural and ethical values by the Vietnamese government is consistent with the larger vision of national unity and social harmony (Nguyen, 2016). Interfaith dialogue

and policies involving community-based initiatives help reinforce the positive role that these values play in the development of social cohesion (Khalid & Lopez, 2023). Various religious organizations in Vietnam actively engage in promoting moral education and welfare in their communities in ways that further enhance it (Rivera & Nickels, 2014).

Community Leadership and Support

Community leadership has always been viewed with the support of religious organizations as an indispensable force in the building of social cohesion among localities (Berger, 2018). The community leader serves as the arbitrator and coordinator, facilitating inclusivity and alignment of individual and group goals with broader communal objectives (Lee, 2024). Research has shown the remarkable importance of effective leadership among others in building trust and reducing conflicts through active mobilization of community members into shared responsibility and collective decision-making (Fukuyama, 1995). In Vietnam, these include local community leaders such as village elders, government officials, and religious leaders, who are often the voices to rally for community problems and set up functionally community-based organizations (Staples, 2016). They serve to emphasize the importance of the community's moral principles of harmony and solidarity, which invariably play an important part in the maintenance of social cohesion.

Religious organizations render complementary support to community leadership through their moral directions and facilitative work (Miller, 2002). These organizations are embedded in the social context of Vietnamese communities, with Buddhist temples, Catholic churches, and other religious institutions providing the first locus within such communities where communal activities take off (Wood, 2002). Their platform for charity work, education, and disaster relief has further been said to not only meet material needs but also grow interpersonal trust and community resilience (Taylor, 2007). For example, the Buddhist concept of compassion and mutual aid is infused in many community welfare programs, thus further enhancing ethics and shared values across communities that foster social harmony (Canda et al., 2019). Evidence in Vietnam indicates the big contribution of community leadership and religious organizations toward social cohesion (Berger, 2018). Communities with vibrant and inclusive leadership supported by religious institutions enjoy enhanced trust and cooperation, with active participation in community projects. For instance, Seixas & Davy (2008) cite Buddhist monks leading initiatives, such as building schools and disaster relief, that create both material and non-material benefits for the communities. Further, Catholic parishes have played a role in championing interfaith dialog, bringing together representatives from various faith traditions to explore common goals.

In rural areas, where government presence may be limited, religious organizations often fill governance gaps by mediating disputes or providing social services, further enhancing social cohesion (Moore, 2014). The mechanism by which community leadership and religious organizations enhance social cohesion is well-established (Orazani et al., 2023). Leaders and religious personalities are seen to act in neutral and trusted capacities when it comes to conflict negotiation between rival groups, thus promoting cooperation among diverse groups (Parks et al., 2013).

The religious tenets premised on shared morality, such as compassion, respect, and mutual help, reinforce the social structure, thus maintaining good relationships (Casanova, 2001). Together with this, leaders in communities and religious organizations further excel in mobilizing community resources toward shared goals or focal points of cooperation through which the sense

of meaning and interdependence among members is created (Ospina & Foldy, 2010). However, challenges could arise with regard to inclusion and equitable representation in leadership and religious support in a pluralistic society. Some groups may, at times, act in favor of certain groups at the expense of others and hence might threaten the process of cohesion (Taylor, 2007).

Nevertheless, the countervailing Vietnamese policies on interfaith dialogue and inclusivity have succeeded in mitigating these risks, allowing for religious organizations with the support of community leaders still to fulfill positive roles in building social cohesion (Goldewijk, 2007). Thus, the interaction between community leadership and religious support comes across as a key factor in promoting trust, cooperation, and resilience. This strongly supports the hypothesis that these factors do positively contribute to social cohesion within local communities.

Based on literature reviews, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Religious participation positively influences social cohesion within communities.

Hypothesis 2: Interfaith interaction positively influences social cohesion within communities.

Hypothesis 3: Cultural and ethical values positively influence social cohesion within communities.

Hypothesis 4: Community leadership and support positively influence social cohesion within communities.

Methodology

Instrument and Participant

The study adopted a structured questionnaire, the aim of which was to measure the multi-dimensional relationship between religion and social cohesion in Vietnam. The development process included extensive literature reviews and interviews with experts in sociology, religious studies, and community dynamics (Harkness et al., 2010) to ensure the validity, reliability, and cultural relevance of the instrument. It contained two parts. The first part dealt with demographic information such as age, gender, education, religious affiliation, residence type, and frequency of religious attendance, which allowed the respondents to be identified in greater depth. The second part dealt with the measurement of constructs such as religious participation, interfaith engagement, shared cultural and ethical values, and perception of community leadership on social cohesion (Chaves & Gorski, 2001; Craft & Goodman, 2019; Furman, 2004; Allen & Gibson, 1987; Friedkin, 2004). Each variable was scored on a five-point Likert scale to assess different degrees of agreement and involvement.

A pilot study on the research involved 40 subjects to improve clarity, cultural appropriateness, and the ability to respond to such a survey, which was followed by expert feedback for some modifications in the instrument (Linaker et al., 2015) in order to better address the desired constructs. The finalized survey was done among 200 respondents based on a sampling design that incorporated random stratification according to the locality of residence: Hanoi, Hue City, and Hoi An City, regions characterized by great cultural and religious diversity (Tuyen, 2023; Malek & Costa, 2015). Such a methodology is stratified sampling by enabling representation of the sample with balanced gender, educational level, and religion, contributing significantly to the generalizability and representativeness of the research.

The research was conducted in early January 2024 around the Vietnamese New Year, a time culturally significant, as it offered an understanding of participation in religious affairs and

community unity. This is the period during which the researcher acquired a rich knowledge of religious activities and their relationship with a community. Also, some ethical issues related to the study were considered. All respondents were informed about consent and anonymity and about willingness to participate. The respondents were told that the responses were not traced back to them individually; they were purely for academic research. The data also underwent extensive verification in order to provide validity and reliability for the findings and ensure the methodological soundness of the study.

Variable	Category	Female (n, %)	Male (n, %)	Total (n, %)
Age	18–25 years	17 (34.7%)	32 (65.3%)	49 (24.5%)
	26–35 years	35 (50.7%)	34 (49.3%)	69 (34.5%)
	36–45 years	20 (43.5%)	26 (56.5%)	46 (23.0%)
	Over 45 years	14 (41.2%)	20 (58.8%)	34 (17.0%)
Education	Bachelor's Degree	41 (43.6%)	53 (56.4%)	94 (47.0%)
	Postgraduate	25 (49.0%)	26 (51.0%)	51 (25.5%)
	Other	20 (36.4%)	35 (63.6%)	55 (27.5%)
Religious Affiliation	Buddhism	29 (39.2%)	45 (60.8%)	74 (37.0%)
	Christianity	25 (41.7%)	35 (58.3%)	60 (30.0%)
	Islam	8 (40.0%)	12 (60.0%)	20 (10.0%)
	Other	24 (52.2%)	22 (47.8%)	46 (23.0%)
Residence Type	Urban	49 (43.8%)	63 (56.2%)	112 (56.0%)
	Rural	37 (42.0%)	51 (58.0%)	88 (44.0%)
Religious Participation	Very Frequently	20 (33.3%)	40 (66.7%)	60 (30.0%)
	Frequently	35 (46.7%)	40 (53.3%)	75 (37.5%)
	Occasionally	21 (43.8%)	27 (56.2%)	48 (24.0%)
	Rarely	10 (58.8%)	7 (41.2%)	17 (8.5%)

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and precision of survey instruments used to assess the relationship between religion and social cohesion in Vietnam. It guarantees that the questionnaire consistently measures the intended constructs across varying contexts. For this study, Cronbach's alpha was employed to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire, providing insight into the extent to which items within each construct are interrelated. According to established guidelines, values of 0.7 and above signify good internal consistency (Kline, 2015), while values in the range of 0.6–0.7 are deemed acceptable in certain contexts, albeit with potential room for item refinement (Cortina, 1993). Scores below 0.6, however, highlight serious reliability concerns, necessitating substantial revisions to the instrument (Kline, 2015).

The findings of the reliability analysis, summarized in Table 2, indicate that all constructs— namely, Social Cohesion, Religious Participation, Interfaith Interaction, Shared Cultural and Ethical Values, and Community Leadership and Religious Support—achieved Cronbach's alpha values of 0.6 and above, with most exceeding the 0.7 threshold. These results underscore acceptable to high internal consistency. Additionally, the smallest item-total correlations for all constructs were above 0.5, further substantiating the reliability of the survey instrument.

To ensure the robustness of the measurement framework, construct validity was assessed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). These methods confirmed that the questionnaire effectively measures the underlying constructs. Convergent validity was demonstrated by the high correlations among items within each construct, indicating that they measure the same theoretical concept (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was also confirmed, as items exhibited stronger correlations with their respective constructs compared to others (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019).

Variable	Number of Observed Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Smallest Item-Total Correlation
Social Cohesion	4	0.767	0.512
Religious Participation	4	0.775	0.529
Interfaith Interaction	4	0.742	0.618
Shared Cultural and Ethical Values	4	0.776	0.533
Community Leadership and Religious Support	4	0.768	0.518

Table 2: Summary of Reliability Analysis

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is simply a toolbox that groups interrelated variables into distinct factors corresponding to the various underlying dimensions (Gorsuch, 1983). The current study employed EFA to test the constructs of religion and social cohesion in Vietnam. Using PCA with Varimax rotation led to the identification of five factors: Community Leadership and Religious Support, Shared Cultural and Ethical Values, Participation in Religious Activities, Interfaith Interaction, and Social Cohesion.

The results (Table 3) provide evidence for a robust internal structure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.919, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 1457.694, p < .001. The five factors together explained more than 60.219% of the variance, which is more than the minimum standard of 50%, hence providing a good interpretation. All variables loaded significantly on single constructs with loading values greater than 0.50, which ensures their validity for the constructs being measured (Hair et al., 2019).

Key findings reveal the role of leadership and support in cohesion within religious communities, the importance of shared cultural and ethical values, the active engagement of followers in religious practices, and interfaith interactions fostering understanding. Social cohesion functioning as a dimension integrates all of these factors into a holistic framework. The tested measurement model provides important insights into how religion affects community dynamics, thus setting a good foundation for further analyses.

Rotated Component Matrix					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
CLR_Support2	.739				

CLR_Support1	.699			
CLR_Support4	.630			
CLR_Support3	.620			
SCE_Values1		.732		
SCE_Values4		.705		
SCE_Values2		.689		
SCE_Values3		.638		
Participation4			.754	
Participation1			.689	
Participation2			.683	
Participation3			.587	
Interaction3				.732	
Interaction4				.723	
Interaction2				.657	
Interaction1				.628	
Cohesion3					.789
Cohesion1					.693
Cohesion4					.582
Cohesion2					.538
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					
Rotation converged in 6 iterations. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) =0.919. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square =1457.694; df=190; sig.=0.000) Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings =60.219; Initial Eigenvalues=1.010					

Table 3. Result of Factor Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is one of the critical statistical methods that serve to address the strength and direction of linear relationships existing between two variables. The correlation analysis provides an understanding of how the movement of one variable relates to the movement of another variable by quantifying how much one variable's changes correspond to the changes of another variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The linear association is measured by r, the Pearson correlation coefficient, which takes a value from -1 to 1. A coefficient of 1 denotes a perfect positive correlation, whereas -1 denotes a perfect negative correlation, while 0 indicates that there is no linear relationship between the variables (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2017). Although correlation analysis describes trends and associations, it should be stressed that correlation does not prove causation, and external influences may affect such relationships (Agresti & Finlay, 2009).

Table 4 provides summary information about the correlation matrix, showing that the dependent variable (Cohesion) is significantly correlated with the independent variables (Participation, Interaction, Shared Cultural and Ethical Values (SCE_Values), and Community Leadership and Support (CLR_Support)). Pearson's correlation coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, with p-values<.001, indicating strong and meaningful linear associations across variables (Field, 2013; Larose, 2014).

The analysis shows strong positive correlations between Cohesion and CLR_Support (r = 0.593) and Cohesion and SCE_Values (r = 0.584), indicating that community leadership and shared cultural and ethical values play an important role in fostering community integration or cohesion. Similarly, cohesion and participation are significantly correlated (r = 0.550), indicating the degree of importance of active involvement in community and religious activities to strengthen community bonds and ties. Moderately significant correlation values obtained between Cohesion and Interaction (r = 0.507) attest to interaction across faiths and personal relationships for the enhancement of trust and collaboration within communities.

Besides the dependent variable, the interrelationships among the independent variables were analyzed: there were strong correlations between CLR_Support and Participation (r = 0.567), CLR_Support with SCE_Values (r = 0.530), implying that leadership and cultural values highly correlate with community and religious participation. What is more, the correlation between Participation and SCE_Values suggests that shared ethical values elicit participation, thereby reinforcing communal life and culture (r = 0.559).

Statistical significance suggests such relationships are indeed valid for inclusion in the subsequent regression analysis. The findings afford deeper insights and understanding of the nature of relationships among the variables and the basis for investigating each of them in relation to social cohesion while controlling for others. In the following stage of analysis, a multivariate regression will be used to identify the most important predictors of social cohesion while taking into account possible multicollinearity and extraneous influences (Seraphin et al., 2019).

In summary, the findings of the correlation analysis concerning social cohesion reveal that significant relationships exist between the dependent variables and the level of significance provided by the independent variables under examination. The results reassert the constructs of these variables to provide valid explanations for community dynamics, therefore paving a solid foundation for the regression analysis. The strong inter-connections between participation, interaction, and values of leadership and engagement resulting from it highlight what one would expect to have in a cohesive and resilient society in the context of the really diverse cultural and religious spectrum of Vietnam.

Correlations						
		Cohesion	Participation	Interaction	SCE_Values	CLR_Support
Cohesion	Pearson Correlation	1	.550**	.507**	.584**	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000

		200	200	200	200	200
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Participation	Pearson Correlation	.550**	1	.490**	.559**	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Interaction	Pearson Correlation	.507**	.490**	1	.489**	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200
SCE_Values	Pearson Correlation	.584**	.559**	.489**	1	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200
CLR_Support	Pearson Correlation	.593**	.567**	.500**	.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Table 4 Correlation Analysis Results

Multivariate Linear Regression Analysis

Multivariate linear regression analysis is an advanced statistical technique used to explore the relationships between multiple independent variables and a single dependent variable. Such analysis utilizes linear equations to quantify the extent of influence each independent variable has on the dependent variable represented by regression coefficients. The coefficients show the magnitude and direction of the impact of each independent variable, providing a very profound view of how these independent variables relate to the dependent variable (Greene, 2003). Furthermore, multivariate regression allows prediction analysis that enables researchers to estimate the dependent variable's outcomes based on the values of independent variables (Hair et al., 1998). It is dominantly used in social sciences, economics, and other fields to assist in explaining complex relationships and in predicting outcomes (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Hair et al., 1998).

The results of the regression analysis for this study are presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7. It has good explanatory power, as shown by the robustness of the F-test (F = 47.201, p < 0.001). The R-squared value of 0.492 implies that it explains close to 49.2% of the variance in the dependent variable level of Cohesion attributed to the independent variables Participation, Interaction, SCE_Values, and CLR_Support. A further check into the adjusted R-squared, which was 0.482, supports the validity of the model since it accounted for the number of predictors and sample

size. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.262 suggests that autocorrelation was not an issue, thus supporting the reliability of the results (Hair et al., 2019).

The analysis discloses that the Multicollinierity problem does not exist, as all Variance Inflation Factor values are well below 10. The maximum value was only 1.779 for Participation. This means that the independent variables are not highly correlated, and thus, regression coefficients can be estimated with reasonable precision (Kutner et al., 2005). The standardized coefficients provide insights into the comparative importance of each independent variable to social cohesion.

From the regression coefficients (Table 7), it is observable that contributions to explaining the variations in Cohesion come from all independent variables. CLR_Support has positive effects, being the strongest one ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$), thus speaking to the important role of community leadership in social cohesion. SCE_Values also has a big influence ($\beta = 0.266$, $p < 0.001$), signaling the significance of a set of cultural and ethical values for making communities stand united. Participation ($\beta = 0.166$, $p = 0.015$) and Interaction ($\beta = 0.156$, $p = 0.014$) had slightly low but very significant contributions, thus attesting to the role of active involvement in community-based activities and interfaith interrelations for strengthening community ties.

These findings support the hypothesis that community leadership, cultural and ethical values, participation, and interaction are all determinants of social cohesion in Vietnam. In terms of standardized coefficients, they show that even though all factors do matter, community leadership and shared values have the greatest impact on cohesive communities.

In conclusion, multivariate linear regression analysis presents compelling arguments on the inter-correlation between independent variables and the dependent variable (Cohesion). Being statistically rigorous features very high R-squared values and very low multicollinearity, which improves the results the model yields. These findings provide a further stepping stone toward understanding the factors that facilitate social cohesion and give actionable insight to policymakers and community leaders to foster social cohesion within different cultural and religious settings.

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.701[a]	.492	.482	.56353	2.262
a. Predictors: (Constant), CLR_Support, Interaction, SCE_Values, Participation					
b. Dependent Variable: Cohesion					

Table 5 Model Summary

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.959	4	14.990	47.201	.000[b]
	Residual	61.926	195	.318		

	Total	121.885	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Cohesion						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CLR_Support, Interaction, SCE_Values, Participation						

Table 6 ANOVA analysis results

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.467	.191		2.449	.015		
	Participation	.163	.067	.166	2.443	.015	.562	1.779
	Interaction	.157	.064	.156	2.470	.014	.653	1.530
	SCE_Values	.252	.063	.266	4.008	.000	.589	1.697
	CLR_Support	.281	.067	.279	4.159	.000	.578	1.731
a. Dependent Variable: Cohesion								

Table 7 Coefficients of the Model

Results

From the above, regression analysis renders strong evidence supporting the tested hypotheses and contributors to social cohesion within various Vietnamese communities. Religious participation has a positive impact on social cohesion, with regression coefficient β=0.163 and p-value=0.015 that collectively identification with higher levels of religious participation likely builds stronger social bonds and collective trust within the communities. This could be said to provide occasions for many forms of interpersonal interaction through religious activities such as festivals and prayer meetings, which revive shared values and heighten community solidarity. Since this finding does emphasize the acceptance of the hypothesis, and since the p-value is less than 0.05, interfaith interaction has been found to have a positive effect on social cohesion, with a regression coefficient of β=0.157 and p-value=0.014. This highlights dialogue and good coexistence between religious groups in creating mutual trust while reducing prejudices against each other.

Collective charitable activities or platforms aimed at serious governmental discussions foster better understanding and tolerance among different religious communities. Statistically significant results reinforce the hypothesis that interfaith interaction will support social cohesion. Cultural and ethical values are the next exceptional factor with an intermediate positive impact on social cohesion, with a regression coefficient of β=0.252 where p=0.000. They showed the immense importance of shared ethical and moral standards mostly rooted in religious teaching directed towards fostering collective spirit, trust, and cooperation. Community bonding through events like Tết (Lunar New Year) and Vu Lan fests promotes cultural values of harmony and community support, further strengthening social bonds. The strongest evidence empirically verifies the hypothesis, thus explaining the expository role of cultural and ethical values in cohesion. The factor that prouder collaboration and support of the community leadership comes

next and has the strongest positive impact on social cohesion and has been given a warm welcome by the statistical model since it yields a high regression coefficient, β=0.281 with p=0.000.

Unlike any other personality-type person like service leaders, religious personnel, or community organizers, local leaders are portrayed as better capable of inspiring their communities toward resilience and social unity. They can mediate conflicts and further enrich those communities by providing resources that address social issues. Besides all, the collaboration of religious bodies, such as sharing moral directives and practical assistance, further reinforces community cohesion. That the outcome is statistically significant indeed gives strong support to the hypothesis as it substantiates community leadership and communal backing in the making of harmonious and integrated societies.

In summary, four hypothesized factors of religious participation, interfaith activities, cultural and ethical values, and community leadership have been statistically validated via various model investigations for their impact on producing social cohesion in the Vietnamese community. Among these, community leadership was accorded the highest weight, while the next highest degree of influence emanated from cultural and ethical values. This is consistent with both theoretical conjectures and reviewed empirical evidence, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of social cohesion and the vital roles religion and leadership play in building cohesive communities.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the mechanisms through which stakeholder participation, interfaith interactions, cultural and ethical values, and community leadership reinforce social cohesion in Vietnamese communities. The positive relationship between religious engagements and social cohesion gives credence to previous studies emphasizing religious endeavors in tightly knitted social ties and establishing trustworthiness among members. Accordingly, Lewis et al. (2013) concluded that frequent involvement in religious encounters fosters social interactions and solidifies shared values. In the Vietnamese community, religious practice with festivals, prayer meetings, and charity events is not just a mechanism for facilitating interpersonal trust but also an informal way of giving aid. These findings were substantiated by Judijanto et al. (2024), who pointed out that religious engagement strengthens community bonding. The results especially emphasize the importance of interfaith interaction in promoting social cohesion, echoing Tropp's (2022) contact hypothesis that meaningful intergroup contact reduces prejudice and cultivates mutual understanding.

In Vietnam, interfaith partnerships, particularly in disaster relief and poverty alleviation projects, exemplify how joint efforts overcome religious divides to demarcate common goals among heterogeneous communities. The findings corroborate those of Orton (2016), who indicated that areas of active interfaith dialogue generated more trust and cooperation. Further, the cultural-norming context, which is widening in Vietnamese traditions, offers supportive leeways that morph positive tendencies of interfaith interactions with regard to social cohesion. Cultural and ethical values boost social cohesion as those equal moral codes illustrate how classes promote homogeneity in the community. This further supports Durkheim's (1912) argument that shared values and norms bring about the process of social integration. Integration of Buddhist, Confucian, and Catholic teachings into the cultural tradition in Vietnam permits a common moral reference system for homogenous behavior through single and communicative ways among people. Rituals like Tết (Lunar New Year) or Vu lan báo hiếu (Vu Lan) enhance core values

from within, creating collective identity and support. This follows the findings by Siddiq et al. (2024), contending that shared cultural practices originating from religious teachings overcome diversity to create unity within communities. Community leadership and support thus come to have the biggest impact on social cohesion, pointing at the conclusive role of leaders in holding together communities and addressing community issues. This goes in accord with the argument of Burke et al.(2007), which says that good leadership promotes trust and mitigates conflict through collective responsibility and decision-making.

In Vietnam, local leaders like village elders and religious leaders are mediators and unifying forces for both inclusivity and community resilience (Taylor, 2007). The active involvement of religious organizations in providing moral guidance and welfare activities magnifies this effect. These include Buddhist monks leading disaster relief projects and Catholic parishes sponsoring interfaith dialogues. These serve as examples of leadership that actively promotes social cohesion on both tangible and intangible fronts. This reflects Nguyen and Mileski et al.(2014) assertion that such communities would have higher levels of trust, cooperation, and participation in community work if there were active and inclusive leadership. Hence, the findings have implications beyond Vietnam and stem from valuable lessons learned by multireligious communities across the globe. Issues emerging from these findings, thus, suggest that inclusivity, shared values, and interfaith dialogue equally contribute to long-lasting harmony among diverse communities.

By underscoring the significance of inter-religious harmony and inclusivity, Vietnam's policies have played a crucial role in cushioning challenges raised by religious competition or doctrinal differences (Chafetz & Ebaugh, 2000). One of the weighted results of these results is to confirm the enabling climate set by culture and policy in improving the role of religion and its leadership towards enhancing social cohesion. Vietnam can help promote understanding regarding the sharing of possibilities between religious and cultural dynamics and their role in virtues of social unity and resilience amidst the changing times. Thus, this study reiterates the multi-dimensionality of social cohesion while cooperating on a nexus of religious participation, interfaith interaction, common values, and community leadership. These results provide further verification of the existing theories along with another layer of empirical evidence concerning the extraordinary nature of social cohesion as it relates to Vietnam. They have both practical utility and relevance to policymakers, community leaders, and religious entities for their efforts to foster harmonious relationships and resilient communities in transition amidst the social and economic upheaval.

Conclusion

This study addresses the central question of cohesion within multireligious settings, taking into account Vietnam's particular sociocultural and religious flavor in which different religions and similar cultural practices converge to influence communal conduct. Social cohesion underpins sustainable development and societal harmony, but an understanding of their dynamic in pluralistic settings still needs exploring. While previous research studied social cohesion within predominant monoreligion or Western contexts, there is still a serious gap in empirical studies regarding the roles of religion, leadership, and common values in creating cohesion within multireligious societies like Vietnam. This research attempted to fill this gap by investigating the extent to which social cohesion arises from religious participation, interfaith dialogue, cultural and ethical values, and community leadership. The major objective of the research was to

qualitatively assess the effects of these factors on social cohesion and provide specific evidence in relation to the sociocultural context of Vietnam.

Within that multiple linear regression framework, these relationships were then more systematically considered, yielding results robust enough to offer interesting insights into them. The outcomes showed that all four factors had a positive effect on social cohesion, thus corroborating the theoretical framework and contextual insights for Vietnam. The results also make important contributions toward bridging the knowledge gap on the understanding of social cohesion within diverse multireligious communities.

Religious participation was recognized as a critical mechanism for cultivating trust and collective action, confirming Verter's (2003) argument that religious life provides a focal arena for creating social capital. Interfaith contact stood as a strong motivating force in building mutual understanding and reducing bias, again paralleling Hewstone's (2014) work on the contact hypothesis, which emphasizes the potency of meaningful intergroup contact (Hewstone et al., 2014). The study also reemphasized how shared cultural and ethical values bond and incite collective accountability among people by reiterating Durkheim's (1912) idea concerning moral cohesion as being at the heart of social integration. Particularly notable was the fact that community leadership and community support were gross ferrous to the other three factors, reinforcing the aforementioned polyphonic viewpoint on the effectiveness of leadership over stimulating resilient and harmonious communities, as written by Fukuyama (1995).

These results hold potential relevance to policy and practice. There is a need to harness and integrate variables such as religious participation and interfaith cooperation, thus proposing ways of strengthening communal ties in multireligious societies. Policymakers could take heed of these findings in terms of fostering interfaith dialogue as a viable platform, increasing the cultural significance of shared events, and creating initiatives in furtherance of community-oriented leadership. In Vietnam, these strategies align quite closely with how the country's modernistic progression and socio-economic ramifications are imposing strains on the aging forms of communal functioning. Faith-based organizations may find a central locus of support as the stations of ethical education, social welfare, and community mobilization.

 While this study contributes significantly to these issues, it is not without its few caveats. Some regions have been selected to collect the data, and these regions might not adequately represent the range of cultural and religious diversity in Vietnam. Also, the cross-sectional design limits the inference of causal relationships. In future studies, longitudinal designs will be used to bypass these limitations or widen the domains that include many other regions and communities as a broader spatial coverage. Also, a consideration of modern issues, such as the role of new media and its impact on religious and interfaith interactions, may give new insight into the workings of social cohesion in increasingly digital and interdependent societies.

 In summary, this study serves to further understand social cohesion by using empirical evidence from within a multireligious context. It examines the interplay of the interrelated roles of religion, cultural values, and leadership in community harmony. The results provide not only validation for already established theoretical models but also usable prescriptive suggestionsfordecisionorvetimplementationin, for example, policy formulation, community mobilization, and the working of interreligious dialogues. The study lays open directions for further research into multiple real-life presentations of social cohesion across different, heterogeneous, and changing societies across the world and contributes to the global audience toward attaining inclusive and sustainable development.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: ☐Under 18   ☐18–25   ☐26–40   ☐41–60   ☐Over 60

Gender: ☐Male   ☐Female

Education Level: ☐No formal education ☐Primary school   ☐Secondary school   ☐High school   ☐ College/University   ☐Postgraduate

Occupation: ☐Farmer ☐Business owner   ☐Employee (public/private sector) ☐ Retired ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Religious Affiliation: ☐Buddhism   ☐Catholicism   ☐Protestantism   ☐Other (please specify): _____   ☐None

Frequency of Religious Participation: ☐Never ☐Rarely ☐Occasionally ☐Frequently

☐ Very frequently

This survey aims to identify religion and social cohesion in Vietnam. On this scale, there is no correct or incorrect response. Please read each statement carefully and indicate your level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

Cohesion	Social Cohesion					
Cohesion 1	Members of my community trust each other.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Cohesion 2	There is a strong sense of belonging among community members.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Cohesion 3	People in my community collaborate to address shared challenges.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Cohesion 4	Community members resolve conflicts through mutual understanding.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Participation	**Religious Participation**					
Participation1	I actively participate in religious ceremonies and events.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Participation2	I regularly attend religious gatherings (e.g., services and prayers).	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Participation3	I contribute resources (time, money, or goods) to my religious community.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Participation4	My involvement in religious activities strengthens my sense of belonging.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Interaction	**Interfaith Interaction**					
Interaction1	I engage in conversations with individuals from different religious backgrounds.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Interaction2	I participate in events that include members of multiple religious communities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Interaction3	I feel comfortable working with people of different faiths.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Interaction4	Interactions with other religious groups have improved my understanding of their beliefs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SCE_Values	**Shared Cultural and Ethical Values**					

SCE_Val ues1	My religious teachings promote values that align with community traditions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SCE_Val ues2	Shared cultural values strengthen the bonds among community members.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SCE_Val ues3	Religious ethics encourage mutual respect within the community.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SCE_Val ues4	Common values derived from religion help resolve conflicts in the community.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
CLR_Su pport	**Community Leadership and Religious Support**					
CLR_Su pport1	Community leaders effectively address the needs of local residents.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
CLR_Su pport2	Religious organizations play a crucial role in supporting community development.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
CLR_Su pport3	My community benefits from the collaboration between leaders and religious groups.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
CLR_Su pport4	Leadership and religious support contribute to resolving disputes in my community.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Thanks for participating in this study!