HOW DOES DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE SHAPE RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION AMONG URBAN MUSLIMS? A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING ANALYSIS FROM BANJARMASIN

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Abstract
Within the framework of religious demography, religious participation can be understood as a phenomenon shaped by population structure rather than by isolated individual attributes. However, empirical studies of urban Muslim communities in Southeast Asia have rarely examined how demographic characteristics are structurally associated with patterns of religiosity. To address this gap, the present study analyzes the relationship between demographic structure and religious participation among adult Muslims in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 312 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Religious participation was operationalized as a multidimensional construct encompassing congregational worship, community religious activities, and religion-based social involvement. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, binary logistic regression, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The regression results show that age and education are positively associated with the intensity of religious participation, while employment status and migration background are negatively associated. The logistic regression model indicates that gender, marital status, and length of residence significantly increase the probability of individuals being classified in the high participation category. At the latent level, the SEM results indicate a statistically significant structural association between demographic structure and religious participation, supporting the view that religiosity in urban settings is linked to individuals' positions within population configurations. By distinguishing observed-variable and latent-construct analyses, this study contributes to the structural demography of religion by providing empirical evidence that urban Muslim religiosity in Southeast Asia is systematically associated with demographic positioning. The findings enrich the limited literature on urban Muslim religiosity and offer empirically grounded insights for scholars and policymakers concerned with religion, demography, and urban social dynamics.

Keywords: Religious participation; urban Muslims; demographic structure; structural equation modelling; Banjarmasin

A. Introduction

Demography as a scientific discipline examines the size, structure, distribution, and dynamics of populations and their implications for a wide range of social phenomena, including religious behavior (Iyer, 2016; McQuillan, 2004). Within the framework of social demography, religion is understood not merely as a system of beliefs or norms, but also as a population characteristic that interacts dynamically with demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, employment status, marital status, and population mobility (Sherkat, 2014; Center, 2016). From this perspective, religious participation can be conceptualized as a demographic phenomenon that reflects the relationship between population structures and the social contexts in which individuals live. This view shifts attention away from purely theological or psychological explanations of religiosity and toward structural positioning within populations.

First, a central debate in the literature concerns the relationship between demographic transition and religiosity. Religious demography research consistently shows that changes in population structure have consequences for patterns of religious commitment and participation. Demographic transition theory suggests that shifts in fertility, mortality, and age composition are associated with broader transformations in value orientations, including religious values (Lesthaeghe, 2014; Norris & Inglehart, 2011). However, the empirical relationship is neither linear nor uniform across societies. Modernization processes such as increasing educational attainment, declining fertility, and longer life expectancy do not automatically produce secularization. Instead, they often generate differentiation in religious orientations and variation in forms of participation (Gorski & Altınordu, 2008; Berger, 2014). These findings challenge earlier secularization assumptions and emphasize that demographic change reshapes—rather than necessarily diminishes—religiosity.

Cross-national empirical studies further identify age as one of the most consistent demographic determinants of religious participation. Older individuals generally demonstrate higher levels of religious involvement than younger cohorts (Voas & Chaves, 2016; Crockett & Voas, 2006). From a life-course perspective, religious engagement is closely linked to life stages, evolving social responsibilities, and changing existential orientations over time (Wilcox, 2002; Sherkat, 2014; Stark & Finke, 2000). Education and employment status add further complexity to this relationship. Higher educational attainment often transforms religious expression into more reflective, selective, and individualized forms rather than weakening it (Becker et al., 2025; Chaves, 2010). Employment status influences participation through mechanisms related to time availability, social stability, and opportunities for community integration (Aassve et al., 2013; Finke & Stark, 1992). Taken together, this debate suggests that religious participation emerges from the interaction between demographic positioning and the structure of social opportunities available to individuals.

Second, another major debate concerns urbanization, modernization, and the reconfiguration of religious life. Urbanization is characterized by high population density, social heterogeneity, mobility, and differentiated social roles, which create environments offering diverse options for religious identity and practice (Bruce, 2011; Yang, 2011). Earlier sociological theories often associated cities with secularization and declining religious authority. However, contemporary research on religion in cities

suggests a more complex pattern: urban areas frequently become arenas in which religious participation is reorganized into new, flexible, and community-based forms (Berger, 2014; Norris & Inglehart, 2012). Religious institutions adapt to urban rhythms, and individuals selectively engage in religious activities that fit their social roles and time constraints.

This perspective implies that urban religious life is not necessarily weakened but rather restructured according to demographic opportunities and constraints. Urban residents experience varying degrees of access to religious institutions, social networks, and communal activities depending on their demographic characteristics. Thus, the urban context intensifies the importance of demographic positioning in shaping religious participation. Understanding religiosity in cities therefore requires attention not only to theological belief but also to demographic composition and social organization.

Third, an emerging debate concerns Muslim religiosity in non-Western urban contexts. Cross-national studies indicate that variations in Muslim religious participation cannot be explained solely by doctrinal differences; they are strongly influenced by demographic characteristics and social context (Norris & Inglehart, 2011; Stark & Finke, 2000). The demographic approach to religion is particularly significant in Muslim societies, given the size of the global Muslim population and the extent to which internal religious dynamics are shaped by age structure, education, and urbanization (Center, 2016; Iyer, 2016). Despite this relevance, empirical representations of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, remain limited within the international literature on religious demography, which has been dominated by Western cases.

Urban Muslim communities in Southeast Asia present distinctive combinations of traditional religious practices, rapid urban growth, internal migration, and exposure to global modernity. These features make them important contexts for examining how demographic structures relate to religious participation beyond Western-centric assumptions. Yet, much of the existing research either adopts descriptive approaches or examines single demographic variables in isolation, leaving the structural relationships among multiple demographic characteristics underexplored.

The city of Banjarmasin, as the main urban centre in South Kalimantan with a Muslim majority population, offers a particularly relevant case. It exhibits a diverse age structure, significant migration flows, and the coexistence of local Islamic traditions with modern urban dynamics. Urban life in Banjarmasin is also increasingly shaped by digital religious exposure through social media, which forms part of the broader social context within which demographic structures operate (Anwar et al., 2024). Although digital exposure is not directly modelled in this study, it reflects the contemporary urban environment in which religious participation occurs. From a demographic perspective, these characteristics position Banjarmasin as a strategic site for examining how population structure is associated with variation in religious participation.

Despite the relevance of these three debates, an important gap remains. Existing studies often examine demographic variables separately, rely on descriptive analysis, or focus on Western settings. Multivariate and latent-variable analyses of religious participation among urban Muslim populations in Southeast Asia remain limited. Accordingly, there is a need for empirical studies that simultaneously assess how multiple demographic characteristics are associated with religious participation using advanced quantitative modelling.

This study addresses this gap by asking: (1) how are individual demographic characteristics associated with the intensity and probability of religious participation

among urban Muslims? and (2) is religious participation structurally associated with demographic positioning when modelled as a latent relationship? By applying multiple regression, logistic regression, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), this study contributes contextually and methodologically to the literature on the structural demography of religion. Rather than proposing a new theoretical framework, the study integrates existing debates within a Southeast Asian urban Muslim context and demonstrates how multivariate and latent-variable approaches can clarify the demographic structuring of religious participation.

B. Methods

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey to examine the statistical association between demographic structure and religious participation among urban Muslims in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. Because the design is cross-sectional, the analysis identifies patterned relationships at a single point in time and does not imply causation (Iyer, 2016; McQuillan, 2004). The population comprised adult Muslims (≥18 years). Stratified random sampling by subdistrict ensured proportional spatial representation (Babbie, 2016). A total of 312 respondents met the recommended sample sizes for multivariate regression and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) estimation (Hair et al., 2019).

Religious participation was defined as involvement in formal and informal religious activities following the behavioral dimension of religiosity (Glock & Stark, 1965; Chaves, 2010). It was measured with three Likert-scale (1–5) indicators: congregational worship attendance, participation in community religious activities, and involvement in religion-based social activities. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted before index construction, and the indicators demonstrated adequate convergent validity and reliability as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. CFA and Reliability Results

Indicator	Loading	α	CR	AVE
Congregational worship	>0.60	>.70	>.70	>.50
Community religious activities	>0.60			
Religious social activities	>0.60			

The validated factor scores were then used to compute a participation index treated as an interval variable in linear regression. For logistic regression, this index was dichotomized using a median split (0 = low, 1 = high). Independent variables included age, gender, education, employment status, marital status, migration status, income, and length of residence (Sherkat, 2014; Voas & Chaves, 2016; Stark & Finke, 2000). Age and length of residence were treated as ratio variables. Gender and migration were dummy-coded. Education (ordinal) was treated as interval. Employment and marital status were dummy-coded, while income was included as an ordinal control. Missing data were minimal (<5%) and handled using mean substitution for scale items and listwise deletion for models.

The analysis proceeded through descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression (participation intensity), binary logistic regression (probability of high participation), and SEM. In SEM, religious participation was specified as a latent construct reflected by the three indicators, while demographic structure was specified as a composite latent construct reflected by the demographic variables. Model adequacy was assessed using standard goodness-of-fit indices summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. SEM Fit Indices and Thresholds

Index	Threshold
χ^2/df	< 3.00
CFI	> 0.90
TLI	> 0.90
RMSEA	< 0.08
SRMR	< 0.08

Prior to modelling, assumptions of multicollinearity, linearity, and residual normality were examined. A 5% significance level was applied throughout. Ethical procedures included voluntary participation, informed consent, and anonymization of responses.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

This section reports the empirical results on the association between demographic structure and religious participation among urban Muslims in Banjarmasin. The presentation follows the analytical sequence used in the study: descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, binary logistic regression, and SEM. Tables and figures are interpreted rather than restated, and the SEM results are reported with clearer separation between measurement and structural components.

The demographic composition of respondents (Table 3) indicates a sample concentrated in productive and middle adulthood, with balanced gender representation and relatively high educational attainment. Employment categories and migration status show substantial heterogeneity, consistent with an urban population marked by mobility and varied economic positions. This diversity is important because it provides the demographic variation required to test whether religious participation is patterned by population structure rather than by single attributes.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 312)

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	18–29 years old	26.3
	30–44 years old	38.1
	45–59 years old	24.0
	≥60 years old	11.6
Gender	Male	48.7
	Female	51.3
Education	Lower middle class	34.9
	Diploma/Bachelor's degree	47.8
	Postgraduate degree	17.3
Employment Status	Formal employment	46.5
	Informal employment	29.8
	Unemployed	23.7
Migration Status	Native population	62.5
	Migrants	37.5

Variation is also evident across the three dimensions of religious participation (Table 4). Congregational worship and community religious activities cluster in the

medium–high range, whereas religion-based social activities are more dispersed.

Table 4. Respondents' Levels of Religious Participation

Dimensions of Religious Participation	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Congregational worship	18.6	41.3	40.1
Community religious activities	22.4	39.7	37.9
Religious social activities	34.9	38.5	26.6

This dispersion signals that not all forms of participation are equally embedded in everyday practice, a pattern that becomes visually clearer in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of religious participant levels among respondents

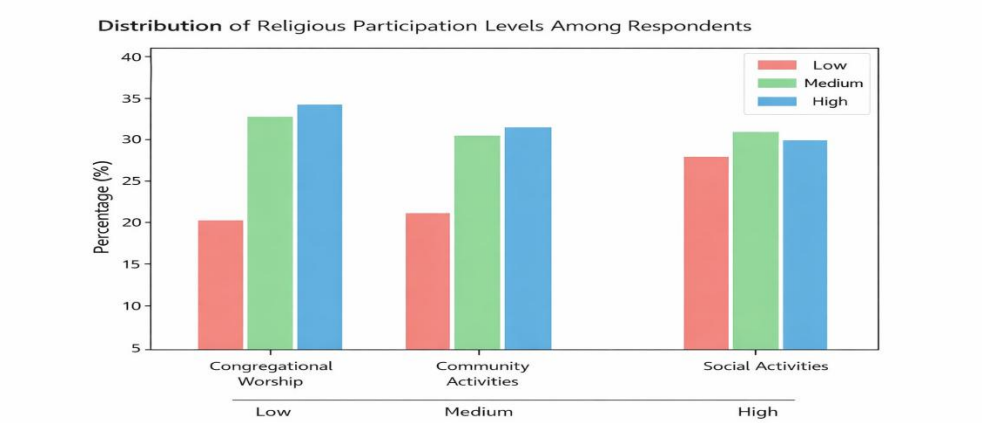

Figure 1 makes this contrast intuitive: the first two dimensions form relatively similar distributions, while the third shows a visibly flatter profile. The figure therefore supports the interpretation that religious participation is multidimensional and unevenly expressed across activity types, justifying the need for both index construction and latent modelling.

To estimate observed associations, a multiple linear regression was conducted using the participation index (Table 5). Without repeating the table entries, two patterns are central. First, age and education show positive associations with participation intensity, indicating that life stage and educational attainment correspond to higher engagement. Second, employment status and migration background show negative associations, suggesting that economic role and mobility relate to lower scores on the index. The model explains roughly one quarter of the variance (Adjusted R^2 = 0.27), indicating meaningful but incomplete explanatory power at the observed-variable level.

Table 5. Linear Regression Results of the Influence of Demographic Structure on Religious Participation (N = 312)

Independent Variables	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	95% CI	p-value
Age	0.214	0.062	[0.092; 0.336]	0.001***
Gender (1 = Female)	0.087	0.054	[-0.019; 0.193]	0.108
Education	0.176	0.058	[0.062; 0.290]	0.003**
Employment Status	-0.143	0.061	[-0.263; -	0.020**

Independent Variables	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	95% CI	p-value
			0.023]	
Migration Status (1 = Migrant)	-0.198	0.067	[-0.329; -0.067]	0.004**
Constant	2.317	0.284	[1.759; 2.875]	<0.001

$R^2 = 0.29$
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.27$
F-statistic = 12.84 ($p < 0.001$)

A complementary perspective is provided by the logistic regression (Table 6), where the outcome is the probability of being in the high-participation category. Here, age, gender, marital status, and length of stay emerge as significant predictors. Compared to the linear model, this analysis highlights demographic factors linked to classification into higher participation rather than incremental score differences, showing how different demographic attributes operate under different outcome specifications.

Table 6. Binary Logistic Regression Results: Probability of High Religious Participation (N = 312)

Variables	Odds Ratio	p-value	95% CI
Age	1.035	<0.001***	[1.018; 1.053]
Gender (Female = 1)	1.221	0.029**	[1.020; 1.460]
Education	1.098	0.234	[0.943; 1.279]
Employment Status	1.154	0.091*	[0.972; 1.369]
Marital Status (Married = 1)	1.279	0.009**	[1.064; 1.538]
Migration Status	0.918	0.311	[0.777; 1.084]
Length of Stay	1.184	0.039**	[1.008; 1.391]

Pseudo R^2 (Nagelkerke) = 0.28

While both regressions identify patterned associations, they treat demographic variables independently. SEM was therefore employed to examine whether these variables coherently reflect a latent demographic structure linked to a latent religious participation construct.

Figure 2. SEM Path Diagram: Demographic Structure → Religious Participant

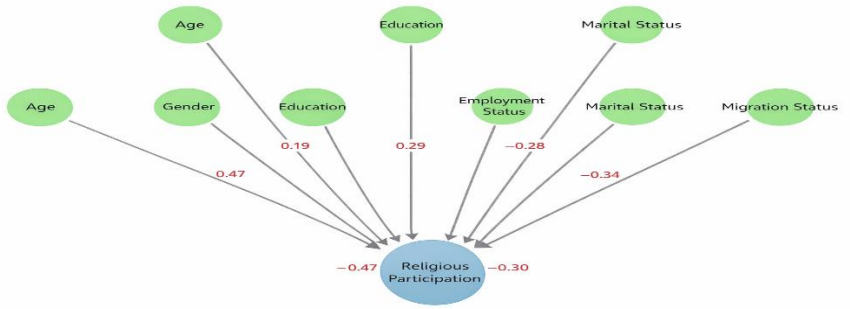

Figure 2 presents the SEM path diagram. It shows two measurement components and one structural path: (1) religious participation measured by three indicators; (2)

demographic structure reflected by the demographic variables; and (3) a direct path from demographic structure to religious participation.

The measurement model confirmed that the three participation indicators load strongly on the latent construct (standardized loadings > 0.60), supporting convergent validity established earlier through CFA. Demographic variables also contributed meaningfully as indicators of the latent demographic structure, indicating that they can be treated as components of a coherent population configuration rather than unrelated predictors.

Model adequacy is summarized through standard fit indices (reported earlier in the method criteria table): χ^2/df below 3, CFI and TLI above 0.90, and RMSEA and SRMR below 0.08, indicating acceptable fit between model and data.

Table 7. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results

Path	Standard Coefficient	p-value
Demographic Structure → Religious Participation	0.47	<0.001

The structural coefficient (0.47) indicates a substantial positive association at the latent level. This result matters beyond the regressions because it shows that religious participation is linked not only to separate demographic attributes but to their combined configuration as a population structure. In other words, SEM demonstrates that the demographic variables operate as an interrelated system associated with religiosity, rather than as isolated predictors.

Taken together, the descriptive patterns, regression estimates, and latent structural model consistently show that religious participation in this urban Muslim context varies systematically with demographic positioning at both observed and latent levels.

2. Discussion

A. Demographic Structure and Urban Religious Participation

The descriptive patterns show that religious participation among urban Muslims in Banjarmasin is embedded in a socially and demographically heterogeneous environment. This aligns with urban demographic arguments that urbanization increases differentiation and mobility rather than producing social uniformity (Wanto et al., 2022; Hoffmann et al., 2023). The concentration of medium-to-high engagement in congregational worship and community religious activities, contrasted with the dispersion in religious social activities, indicates that urbanization reorganizes how religiosity is expressed rather than weakening it (Norris & Inglehart, 2011; Wieder et al., 2023). Not all forms of participation are equally accessible because time availability, social networks, and institutional access differ across residents (Chaves, 2010; Qi et al., 2024). Therefore, the descriptive pattern shows that urban religiosity is multidimensional and varies depending on the type of activity, rather than being expressed uniformly. This phenomenon presents an opportunity to encourage urban communities to express religious and humanitarian values creatively on social media, while still complying with academic ethics and norms (Haliza et al., 2025).

B. Intensity effects: life-course position, education, work, and migration

The linear regression analysis clarifies how demographic attributes relate to the *intensity* of participation. The positive role of age supports life-course theory: later life

stages are associated with stronger institutional attachment and reflective value orientations (Elder et al., 2003; Voas & Chaves, 2016). Education also shows a positive association, suggesting that modernization transforms rather than diminishes religious engagement (Chaves, 2010; Norris & Inglehart, 2011). By contrast, employment status and migration background show negative associations, highlighting time constraints and limited social embeddedness in urban labour markets and settlement processes (Lim & Putnam, 2010; McClure, 2017; Foner & Alba, 2008; Lewis, 2023). Gender is not significant here, suggesting a convergence in male and female participation levels within this urban Muslim setting (Schnabel, 2016; Storm, 2017).

C. Threshold effects: why some variables matter only for "high participation"

The logistic model introduces a different perspective by estimating the *probability* of belonging to the high-participation category. Here, gender, marital status, and length of residence become significant, while education and employment do not. This contrast suggests threshold effects rather than uniform intensity effects. Education may raise overall engagement without necessarily pushing individuals into the highest category, whereas marital status and longer residence strengthen social integration that supports sustained, routinized participation (Regnerus, 2003; Khalil, 2024).

The emergence of gender in this model – but not in the linear model – implies that gender differences may be more visible at higher thresholds of commitment rather than across the full participation spectrum. This pattern reinforces transformation-oriented perspectives in which modernization reshapes how religiosity is expressed without producing simple linear trends (Norris & Inglehart, 2011).

D. Latent Structural Configuration of Urban Religiosity

The SEM analysis extends the findings by showing that demographic variables coherently reflect a latent demographic structure associated with a latent participation construct (Voas & Chaves, 2016; Storm, 2017). The SEM model captures the simultaneity of demographic influences, offering a more comprehensive explanation of religious participation than single-variable approaches. These representations illustrate how Islamic spirituality adapts to urban lifestyles while remaining in interaction with global popular culture (Asri et al., 2025).

Importantly, this finding supports the presence of a latent association, not a proven causal pathway or sequential interaction effects. The cross-sectional design identifies patterned relationships at a single point in time and does not demonstrate causality. Three theoretical implications follow. First, urban Muslim religiosity is better understood as demographically patterned participation rather than as uniform institutional decline. Second, demographic variables operate differently at the levels of intensity and threshold, revealing distinct mechanisms of engagement. Third, modelling observed and latent variables together provides a fuller picture of how population structure relates to religious life. Contextual references to digital and popular culture (Ridho & Sa'ad, 2025; Becker et al., 2025). Hence, it will be necessary to explore not only how Islamic creators construct digital representations of piety, but also how urban viewers interpret and respond to them (Melisa et al., 2025) illustrate the contemporary urban setting but remain secondary to the demographic explanation.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that religious participation among urban Muslims in Banjarmasin is systematically associated with demographic structure rather than being

reducible to isolated individual attributes. By combining linear regression, binary logistic regression, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the analysis shows that age, gender, marital status, and social integration as reflected in length of residence are consistently linked to both the intensity of participation and the probability of belonging to a high-participation group. The SEM results further indicate a meaningful latent association between demographic structure and religious participation with acceptable model fit, underscoring the multidimensional character of religiosity in an urban context. These findings support the structural demography of religion perspective, which understands religiosity as related to individuals' positions within population configurations and social environments. In this setting, urbanization does not weaken religious life but reconfigures how participation is expressed across demographic positions. Notably, the study focuses on structural participation patterns rather than theological belief or doctrinal variation.

More broadly, this study suggests that scholars should approach urban Muslim religiosity in Southeast Asia not through a secularization-versus-piety lens, but through a demographic lens that highlights how participation varies according to life-course stage, social integration, and urban mobility. The practical implications are concrete. Age-sensitive programs may prioritize intergenerational study circles and mosque activities that accommodate older adults while designing flexible formats for younger working populations. Migrant-sensitive initiatives may include neighbourhood-based welcoming forums, local religious mentoring, and integration into existing prayer and study groups to strengthen social embeddedness. For urban workers, religious activities scheduled outside rigid work hours or organized at the neighbourhood level may reduce time-related barriers to participation. Such approaches allow religious and social planners to align programs with the demographic realities of urban Muslim communities.

This study has several limitations. Its cross-sectional design identifies patterned associations at a single point in time and does not establish causal direction. The reliance on self-reported participation measures introduces the possibility of response bias and common-method bias. Future research could employ longitudinal or mixed quantitative–qualitative designs to examine causal mechanisms more directly and to compare patterns across cities in Southeast Asia and other regions.

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F. Author Contributions Statement

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Author 1 conducted the data analysis and drafted the manuscript. Author 2 collected the data and assisted in manuscript revision. Author 3 supervised the research process and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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