

Religious organisations and social capital in Indonesia

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This research project examines the social and political significance of religious schools in rural communities. Using a six-dimensional social capital approach—(i) groups and networks, (ii) trust, (iii) collective action, (iv) information and communication, (v) social cohesion, (vi) empowerment and political action—this study finds that **proximity to religious schools greatly affects a household's social capital index.**

Further highlighting the significance of religious organisations in rural society, the social capital index can be seen to fluctuate according to the affiliation of the nearby madrassah. The social capital index for households near NU-affiliated madrassahs, for example, is higher than for those located near madrassahs affiliated with other organizations. A possible explanation for this is the larger number of community activities sponsored by NU madrassahs.

This research suggests that madrassahs serve as a spring of social capital for rural communities. By cultivating trust and social cohesion and facilitating collective action and knowledge sharing, madrassahs play an important role in shaping local political culture. For this reason, policy makers would be wise to **pay closer attention to the potential of madrassahs as partners in policy implementation.** As one example- building on local networks and trust, madrassahs might prove to be effective partners in the provision and management of microfinance.



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