

Peer Review

Review of: "Religiously Motivated Terrorism: A Systematic Review Exploring Causal Pathways"

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The review article provides a broad and multidisciplinary synthesis of literature on religiously motivated terrorism and successfully integrates psychological, sociopolitical, and ideological perspectives; however, several weaknesses limit its scientific robustness and impact. First, the systematic review methodology lacks transparency and reproducibility because the search strategy, screening process, and PRISMA-style flow reporting are insufficiently detailed, and the inclusion of only 12 studies from 1,275 retrieved records raises concerns regarding selection bias and potential omission of relevant literature. Second, the review relies heavily on heterogeneous and often low-quality primary studies, including media analyses, secondary datasets, and qualitative interviews without standardized validation, which weakens the strength of evidence and causal inference. Third, the conceptual framework remains descriptive rather than analytical, as the review presents themes but fails to synthesize them into a clearly structured theoretical model or causal pathway. Additionally, the review shows regional and thematic imbalance, with disproportionate emphasis on Islamist terrorism while claiming to address religious terrorism broadly, which may introduce interpretive bias. The statistical and methodological critiques of included studies are also inconsistently applied and occasionally speculative. To improve quality, the authors should provide a fully reproducible systematic review protocol with PRISMA guidelines, expand database and time coverage to include more recent literature, apply standardized risk-of-bias assessment tools, develop a clearly defined integrative conceptual model or framework, and ensure balanced representation across different religious and geopolitical contexts to strengthen neutrality, validity, and academic rigor.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.