Exploring the Relationship Between Need for Closure, Religious Ideology, and Identity Fusion

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study examines how the need for certainty drives individuals to form strong bonds with religious groups, a process known as identity fusion. We explore whether epistemic needs—motivations for clarity, assessed by the need for closure—encourage identity fusion indirectly by fostering religious ideology - a shared system of beliefs that reduces uncertainty and strengthens group identity. Grounded in uncertainty reduction theory and motivated reasoning, we hypothesized that while uncertainty alone does not directly predict identity fusion, it indirectly strengthens fusion through religious beliefs. Using cross sectional design from survey data of 580 Indonesian participants aged 17 to 46, we assessed relationships among need for closure, religious ideology, and identity fusion. The instruments included the Indonesian-adapted Need for Closure Scale (α = .79), the Religious Ideology Subscale (α = .79), and pictorial measures of identity fusion. Mediation analysis confirmed that need for closure predicts identity fusion through religious ideology measurement, which fully mediates this relationship. Findings suggest that those seeking certainty are more likely to embrace religious ideologies, thereby intensifying their group bond. This research highlights how ideologies serve as frameworks that help individuals manage uncertainty, enhancing their identity with the group. These insights contribute to understanding the role of epistemic motivations in identity formation and may inform strategies to address group conflict. Future directions include investigating the development of identity fusion over time.

INTRODUCTION

Identity fusion is a deep feeling of oneness with the group that predicts extreme pro-group behavior accompanied by strong loyalty (Gomez et. al., 2020). In contrast to social identity theory, which focuses on how individuals can respond to other groups (intergroup), identity fusion theory focuses its object of study on phenomena within groups (intragroup): how individuals relate to group members. Recent reviews of identity fusion focus on the question," What are the antecedents of identity fusion?"

Previous studies have demonstrated that epistemic needs, such as the need for certainty (need for closure), motivate individuals to adopt ideologies as a way to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, 2000; Kruglanski et al., 1993). Other research highlighted the role of ideology in strengthening group identity through clear and consensual prototypes (Jost et al., 2003; Hogg, 2005). However, these studies tend to focus on the direct relationship between epistemic needs and ideology or the general role of ideology in group identity, without specifically examining how ideology functions as a mediator in driving identity fusion. Theories regarding identity formation lie in the extent to which

individuals can satisfy psychological needs, for example, the classic theory of SDT (self-determination theory) shows that children whose psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relationships are met by their parents show a stronger identity (self-esteem), which is higher due to strengthening the internal motivational locus (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Contemporary theories that explain the function of strengthening group identity also put forward the same basis, namely the formation of identity due to efforts to restore the need to search for significance and be respected and considered necessary by others (Kruglanski et al., 2022). A decade earlier, it was also discussed that identity formation is closely related to motivation to achieve certainty/a sense of certainty (Hogg, 2000). Until now, the satisfaction of psychological needs has been believed to be the basis for forming the self-concept. People are motivated to form a self-identity due to the gap between their needs and achieving the satisfaction of those needs.

This study examines how Islamic teachings provide cognitive closure and reduce uncertainty, aligning with the concept of *yaqin* (certainty) in faith and the significance of the *ummah* (community) in fostering a collective identity (Khan, 2020). Islamic narratives offer structure, purpose, and guidance, reinforcing how religious ideology serves as a framework for reducing existential and epistemic uncertainty (Nasr, 2006). We aim to demonstrate that epistemic needs, or could be expressed as motivation/drive for certainty, which is measured by the need for closure scale (Kruglanski et al., 1993; Roets & Van Hiel, 2007) is a primary/main motivation that makes individuals fuse themselves in groups. The context of this research is identity fusion in religious groups. Of course, individuals who are driven to achieve certainty in forming group identity are more susceptible to acquiring similar group ideological narratives. The group ideological narrative referred to here is the ideology of the religious groups. We will further discuss the theory of motivation (Jost et al., 2003) and uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000) as a mechanism that explains how identity fusion (in religious groups) can occur.

Motivation theory itself, especially the formation of identities related to groups and inter- and intra-group phenomena, is widely discussed from the motivated reasoning perspective (Jost et al., 2003). In their empirical review, Jost and colleague argue that political identity (conservatism/religion) is a phenomenon where individuals are driven by three motivations to fulfill needs, namely epistemic needs - the need to obtain certainty, provisions, rules, or structure, existential needs - needs that arise due to the salience of mortality, the need to obtain a sense of calm to deal with the inevitability of death, and relational needs - the need to foster harmonious social relations by overcoming gaps in opinion/understanding of the world with others. These three needs work hand-in-hand in construing reality around people, primarily through ideology (Jost, 2009). However, it could be argued that the need for certainty or structure possess more fundamental purposes in the reality-constructing function while the fulfillment of existential and relational need is achieved as consequences after achieving closure from sources such as ideology (Ollerenshaw & Johnston, 2022). Take for an example, Simchon, et al. (2021) found that exposure to threat triggers people to express more certainty by using absolute words when explaining causes of threats. Use of certainty-inducing words and quick attribution to threats indicating high need for closure through heightening perceived control (Sankaran, Kossowska & Hecker, 2023), showing that quickly freezes on a conclusion carries palliative effect that attenuated death anxiety. Regarding relational needs, individuals are often found forming relationship with other in order to share reality and eventually forming a homogeneous understanding with others around them that reduce ambiguity while bolstering each-other's beliefs (Dugas & Kruglanski, 2018; Higgins, Rossignac-Milon & Echterhoff, 2021; Rossignac-Milon et al.,

2021). The motivation to achieve a sense of certainty, reduce ambiguity, and generally "achieve structure" could lead to fulfillment of another need: existential and relational needs.

Uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000, 2024) explains how a feeling of uncertainty (subjective uncertainty) can motivate individuals to identify themselves in a group to reduce this feeling of uncertainty; a sense of uncertainty is one of the measures and concepts for measuring and understanding epistemic needs (Kruglanski et al., 1993; Jost et al., 2003). Of course, not all groups can function to satisfy uncertainty; Hogg (2000, 2024) explains that groups need to meet the prerequisites of "high entitativity"- the property of a group that makes it appear as a cohesive, distinct, and structured entity - to reduce this feeling of uncertainty effectively. Take for an example, groups with strict, clear, consistent, and generally structured rules, such as the military and religious groups, tend to be more effective at reducing feelings of uncertainty. Not only does it explain how people join/fuse into groups, but this theory also explains how feelings of uncertainty can make people acquire certain ideologies to reduce uncertainty.

Groups with high entitativity share a common ideology, which Hogg (2005) defines as an integrated and coherent system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that are internally consistent and provide explanations for one's world, place, and experiences. Research conducted by University of Indonesia's political psychology laboratory (in the process of publication) conceptualizes ideology as an individual orientation (attitude/values/belief) about how the state should be regulated which consists of three domains; social (individual orientation about the extent to which the state needs to be involved in cultural arrangements; ethnic traditions, norms, and morality of society), economy (individual orientation about the extent of the role of the state in regulating the people's economy; redistribution of results, competition, citizens's welfare, and ownership) and religious (individual orientation regarding religious separation/inseparation in political activities) (Muluk et al., 2017).

Ideologies are widely shared within groups, vary across different groups, and serve a powerful identity-defining function by mapping the contours of social categories and starkly differentiating groups from one another. Based on this definition, ideology acts as a guide that provides meaning and purpose in life for individuals. Second, ideology acts as a cue that makes individuals recognize others referred to as "us" or "them." Knowing this, it can be stated that ideology is a "tool" that helps individuals to recognize "who am I?" and "where do I stand in the world?" This means that ideology is a system used by an entitative group to make each member manage [reduce] a sense of uncertainty in life. This interpretation of the definition of ideology aligns with one of the premises of uncertainty identity theory, namely premise number 3 of a total of 5 premises, which reads: an ideological, clear, and consensual prototype is an effective way to reduce uncertainty.

The simplicity, clarity, and consensual nature of ideology in reducing uncertainty is undoubtedly obvious in cases of fundamentalism, for example, previous research from an Indonesian sample showed that simple cognitive structure measured using various cognitive function scales (need for closure; dogmatism, right-wing authoritarianism) predicts intratextual fundamentalism scores - namely, an individual's attitude towards a verse of scripture that contains the degree of agreement with the item -the following items: "My religious scriptures are definitely above other religious scriptures; God has given His words through my religious scriptures as a complete and perfect guide; There is only one guide to the truth, namely the holy book of my religion; People who do not follow my religious scriptures will not find the truth" (Muluk & Sumaktoyo, 2009). These results indicated that uncertainty tends to cause individuals to interpret scriptures non-contextually (absolute truth, immune from negotiation, providing an objective reality of world conditions). The interpretation of this research results is that individuals with a high lack of certainty tend to acquire

principles/guidelines/modules that provide more accessible, straightforward, clearer, and non-contradictory explanations. This is precisely what is referred to as ideology. Furthermore, Hood et al. (2005) argued that intratextual fundamentalism is central to the main characteristics of members categorized as religious fundamentalists, including extremist militants. This means that ideology is implicitly a "mark of high entitativity group": Individuals in fundamentalist groups establish effective communication and further develop harmonious intra-group dynamics (relationships between members) through the use of the same ideological language. Because each member has the same language, it is easier for them to be recognized and understood, share experiences, and establish harmonious relationships, which is the initial precursor to the emergence of identity fusion. Gomez et al. (2020) argued that perceived shared experience between group members is the best current clue that can explain how identity fusion can occur. When experience is shared, and ideology serves as a common language understood by all group members, unity and coherence emerge naturally. In that case, there is a high probability that identity fusion will thrive in the soil of this ideological network. This study contributes to general psychology by demonstrating the universal relevance of theories like uncertainty reduction and motivated reasoning while situating these processes within the cultural and religious framework of an Indonesian Muslim sample.

Development of Hypotheses

Based on uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000), we hypothesize that feelings of uncertainty can predict ideology acquisition because ideology guides how I should act in the world. Because ideology is also a sign of group entitativity, which allows individuals to get to know each other and understand and share experiences, acquiring ideology will make individuals experience identity fusion, merging personal identity with group identity. We argue further that the reduction in individual uncertainty resulting from identity fusion occurs entirely due to the mechanism of ideology acquisition: people no longer benefit from the reduction in uncertainty from identity fusion in groups when ideology is included as a mechanism. From here, operationally, we declare:

H1: Sense of uncertainty (need for closure) does not directly predict identity fusion.

H2: Sense of uncertainty (need for closure) predicts religious ideology.

H3: Religious ideology predicts identity fusion.

H4: Sense of uncertainty (need for closure) indirectly predicts identity fusion through religious ideology.

METHODS

Design

The research design employed a cross-sectional survey method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), a widely used approach in psychological research to gather data from a sample at a single point in time. This method allows for the examination of relationships between variables—sense of certainty (need for closure) (V1), identity fusion (V2), and religious ideology (V3, mediator)—as well as the inclusion of demographic covariates like gender, age, and education. Cross-sectional surveys are particularly useful for exploring correlational relationships and testing mediation models.

Procedures and Data Collection

The study employed a cross-sectional survey method with purposive sampling (non probability). The criteria for respondents in this study were the public, who were at least 17 years old.

Data collection was carried out offline on a sample of students. The incentive is in the form of a thank-you gift with a value of IDR 15,000. The research adhered to standard ethical guidelines, including informed consent and confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Instrument

Need for Closure is a psychological construct that describes individual motives/needs/drives that cause people to have conservative political attitudes (Jost et al., 2003). The need for closure scale measures epistemic motives (15 items; Kruglanski et al., 1993), which measures individuals' drive to achieve certainty/a sense of certainty (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Sample item includes: "When I finish making a decision, I feel relieved." "I feel uncomfortable when I cannot understand the cause of an event that happened to me". The Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) has been adapted, translated, validated previously into Indonesian from previous research (Muluk & Sumaktoyo, 2010). The validity of the instruments used in this study has been previously established through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in a national survey of Indonesian respondents. Muluk and Sumaktoyo (2010) conducted CFA on the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) and other related constructs, selecting items with the highest significant loadings to improve measurement reliability. The CFA results demonstrated strong goodness-of-fit indices, supporting the structural validity of the NFCS, the Dogmatism Scale, and the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale in the Indonesian context. In this research, the NFCS demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

Religious Ideology

In the context of this research, the term "religious ideology" refers to a structured and coherent system of religious beliefs, values, and attitudes that provide meaning, guidance, and a framework for interpreting one's experiences and the world. Operationally, ideology is a score of an individual's position on the political spectrum and an individual's attitude about how the Indonesian state should be governed (Muluk et al., 2019). Religious ideology was measured using the Indonesian version of the Political Ideology scale (12-item short version) in the social, religious, and economic domains (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). We used only the religious ideology subscale (4 items). An example is the item "Blasphemy should be punished by death sentence". The validity of the instrument used in this study has been previously established through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in a national survey of the Indonesian population (Muluk et al., 2019). Authors demonstrated the structural validity of the Religious Ideology Subscale within the broader Political Ideology Scale, confirming its psychometric robustness and applicability in measuring ideological constructs in Indonesia. In this research, religious ideology subscale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

Identity Fusion

Pictorial measuring tools (images) are used to measure identity fusion. A pictorial-based assessment where participants selected images representing their perceived overlap with a religious group. The scoring was based on a standardized fusion scale (Gomez et al., 2020), where greater overlap indicated higher identity fusion. Here is one identity fusion item (Gomez et al., 2020).

Pilihlah satu diagram yang paling menggambarkan bagaimana Anda melihat hubungan diri Anda dan Islam:
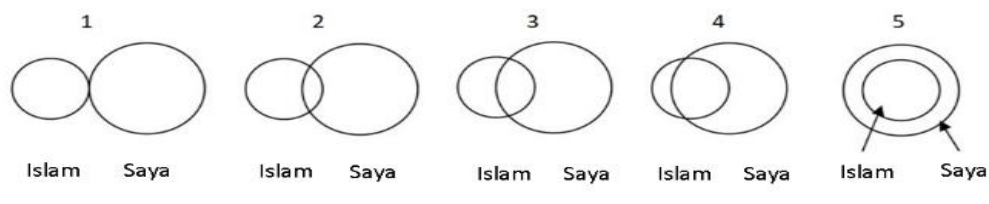
Figure 1. Measurement of Identity Fusion, adapted from Gomez et al (2020).

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents consisted of 162 men (27.9%) and 408 women (70.3%) [10 missing data/1.7%] with an age range of (17-46 years). High school graduates dominated the educational level of participants in this study with a total of 503 participants (86.7%), followed by junior high school graduates (2 participants/.3%), diploma (29 participants/5%), bachelor's degree (28 participants/4.8%), S2 (5 participants/.9%), S3 (1 participant/.2%), and others (6 participants/1%).

Table 1. Intercorrelation between variables

		1	2	3	4
1	Identity Fusion				
2	Religious Ideology	.257**			
3	Need for Closure	.094*	.183**		
4	Age	.048	-.051	-.139**	
5	Sex	.018	.106*	.106*	-.097*

There is a positive correlation between Identity Fusion and Religious Ideology (r= .257, p < .01); this shows that individuals who feel identity fusion tend to have stronger religious ideological beliefs. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between Identity Fusion and Need for Closure (r= .094, p < .05), which indicates that a high level of identity fusion is correlated with a tendency to seek completion and clarity in thinking. However, there was no significant relationship between identity fusion and age and gender.

Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between Religious Ideology and the Need for Closure (r= .183), indicating that individuals with stronger religious and ideological beliefs also have a greater tendency to seek clarity in their thinking. Additionally, there was a negative relationship between the Need for Closure and Age, indicating that the older a person is, the lower their need for completion or clarity. Finally, the positive correlation between the Need for Closure and Gender (r= .106) suggests that women tend to have a higher need to seek clarity and certainty than men.
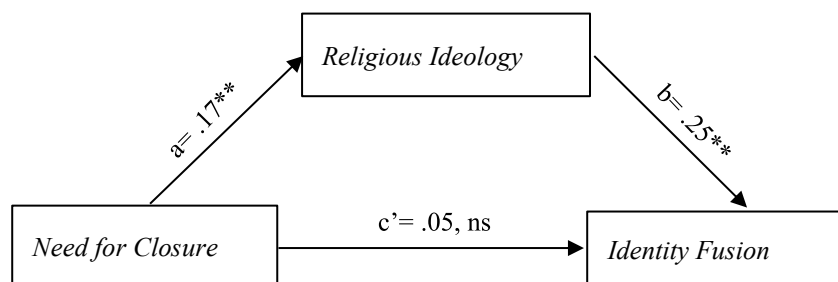
Figure 2. Mediation Analysis

Path a, b, c, and c' is a coefficient that represents regression weight. Path c= = total effect. Path a, b, dan c'= direct effect.

Notes: **p < .01, *p < .05. All numbers are standardized regression coefficients—ns= non-significant.

We conducted mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). This method estimates the indirect effect of the independent variable (need for closure) on the dependent variable (identity fusion) via the mediator (religious ideology). Bias-corrected bootstrapping (5,000 samples) was employed to assess the significance of mediation effects. Goodness-of-fit indices for the model were not applicable, as this analysis does not involve structural equation modeling (SEM). Mediation analysis showed that the relationship between Need for Closure (IV), Religious Ideology (Moderator), and Identity Fusion (DV) reaches statistical significance with the information $F_{(2, 559)}$ = .261, MSE= .946, $p < .01$, R-sq= .068. A significant path (a = .17, $p < .01$) indicates that the Need for Closure positively influences Religious Ideology. Furthermore, Path b, which is also significant (b = .25, $p < .01$), shows that Religious Ideology positively influences Identity Fusion. These findings illustrate that individuals who need clarity and strong religious and ideological beliefs tend to have higher identity fusion. In the analysis model, the direct effect of the need for closure on identity fusion did not reach statistical significance (c'= .05, $p > .05$). This indicates that the influence of the need for closure is fully explained indirectly through religious ideology.

The mediation analysis confirmed all four hypotheses in the proposed model. Hypothesis 1 (H1) was supported, as there is no direct relationship between the need for closure—a measure of uncertainty—and identity fusion. This suggested that the influence of uncertainty on identity fusion is indirect. Hypothesis 2 (H2) was confirmed, demonstrating that individuals with a strong need for certainty are more likely to adopt religious beliefs, likely as a means of fulfilling their desire for clarity and stability. Hypothesis 3 (H3) was also validated, indicating that religious ideology contributes to a stronger alignment of identity with one's group or belief system, fostering identity fusion. Lastly, Hypothesis 4 (H4) was supported, showing that the need for closure indirectly influences identity fusion through religious ideology, which serves as the channel through which uncertainty fosters a deep connection to one's group.

DISCUSSION

This research contributes to both general and Islamic psychology by exploring how the need for certainty leads people to adopt ideologies and develop a deep connection with their group. It shows how religious ideologies provide clarity and strengthen group identity, reflecting broader psychological theories like uncertainty reduction and shared reality. In the context of Islamic psychology, it highlights the role of shared religious experiences and narratives in fostering group connection, particularly in Indonesia's collectivist and conservative culture.

This research aims to demonstrate that epistemic needs. The statistical analysis results support the hypotheses proposed in this research. The first hypothesis (H1) suggests that a sense of uncertainty does not directly predict identity fusion. Although a positive correlation was found between uncertainty and identity fusion (r= .094, $p < .05$), mediation analysis showed an insignificant relationship (c'= .05, ns). This finding can be based on the understanding of uncertainty theory, which states that subjective uncertainty can motivate individuals to identify themselves in groups to reduce this feeling of uncertainty (Hogg, 2000). In Summary, uncertainty cannot explain why individuals can experience identity fusion independently. Therefore, the researcher proposed an additional hypothesis (H4) to explain these dynamics by including the religious ideology variable as a mediator. Researchers argue that the mechanism that might occur in individuals who experience uncertainty will encourage the individual to adopt or identify themselves with a particular ideology/group

(religious ideology), which in turn encourages the individual to merge into the ideology/group he holds.

The second hypothesis (H2) suggests that feelings of uncertainty predict ideology. This is supported by data that shows a positive correlation (r= .183, p < .01). It could be argued that individuals with stronger religious and ideological beliefs also have a greater tendency to seek clarity in their thinking. On the other hand, mediation analysis also supports this hypothesis (a = .17, p < .01), which is consistent with the concept that individuals seek ideology to reduce uncertainty (John et al., 2012; Rebecca et al., 2020).

The third hypothesis (H3) links ideology to identity fusion. A positive relationship was found between identity fusion and religious ideology (r= .257, p < .01). This showed that individuals who feel a fusion of identities tend to have stronger religious ideological beliefs. The mediation analysis found a significant direct effect (Path b = .25, p < .01), which shows that Religious Ideology positively influences Identity Fusion. It can be said that these findings are in accordance with the understanding that ideology functions as a foundation that can strengthen identity formation within groups (Fekadu et al., 2022).

The fourth hypothesis (H4) shows that a sense of uncertainty indirectly predicts identity fusion through ideology. Mediation analysis showed results that supported the hypothesis (a = .17, p < .01, b = .25, p < .01, c'= .05, p > .05). These findings showed that ideology can fully mediate the relationship between uncertainty and identity fusion. Overall, this research illustrates that individuals experiencing uncertainty tend to adopt ideology as a mechanism for managing uncertainty, and through this ideology, they then experience identity fusion.

This research shows that epistemic needs, namely the need to understand and navigate the social world, are essential to identity formation. A sense of uncertainty, as a form of deprivation of epistemic needs, encourages individuals to search for information and meaning in the social world. One way to gain this information and meaning is to identify with groups with the same values and beliefs. This finding can be explained from the perspective of shared experience, which is one of the main mechanisms of how uncertainty affects identity fusion. When individuals experience uncertain situations, they seek information and meaning from other people experiencing the same situation (Reese & Whitehouse, 2021).

Furthermore, Reese and Whitehouse (2021) explained that shared experience begins with sharing emotional events with a group. These experiences trigger clear and long-lasting episodic memories (Whitehouse, 1992), motivating individuals to reflect on their experiences and the new experiences they will face (Whitehouse, 2002). This process is especially strong when the events in question have unclear characteristics and are not easy to interpret (both in the initiation phase and the vision quest), as is common in emotionally intense collective rituals (Whitehouse, 2004; Richert et al., 2005). An important note is that for shared experiences to lead to fusion, they must be emotionally intense. However, for emotionally intense events to produce identity fusion, they must also have transformative or self-defining qualities (Blagov & Singer, 2004). Intense emotions are often associated with negative feelings, but hypothetically, equally intense positive experiences can also lead to fusion, such as challenging sports competitions (Kavanagh et al., 2019).

Then what about fusion in groups that are unknown/have not been encountered before? This can be explained in the shared experience process through narrative dispersion, where individuals share their stories and experiences with others in the group. Narrative dispersion can occur even in contexts where group members or the group itself is unknown to the individual, considering the current digital era. Moreover, in the digital era, individuals can connect with others with the same

interests and experiences through online platforms. In line with this, Quadri (2022) explains that individuals in digital spaces can spread narratives without regard to familiarity. This allows individuals to gain information and meaning from others they do not know personally. According to Winterbottom et al. (2008), narratives or stories can be used effectively to strengthen information and increase persuasiveness. This cannot be separated from the context of the Muslim participants and the variables oriented toward the narrative of Islamic ideology and identity in this research. Islam, like other Abrahamic religions, relies on the stories of the prophets, as well as the stories of the prophet's friends, to seek wisdom and references about what is good and right, as well as what behavior needs to be done and what needs to be avoided (Sardar, 2017). Stories help individuals better understand the situations and characters involved in the story. Stories can also help individuals to model behavior and learn from the experiences of others. In contexts such as unfamiliar groups, narrative dispersion can illustrate how stories or narratives spread within a group can influence perceptions and the formation of group identity, even though the group members may not know each other.

On the other hand, Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, is characterized by a collectivist culture and strong conservative tendencies (Suryadinata, 2003). Although not officially an Islamic state, Islamic principles play an essential role in political decision-making in Indonesia. While the majority are moderates and conservatives, it also consisted of few extremists who pushed discriminatory and violent ideals in politics and judicial system. The Indonesian government also recognizes other religions, such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and every Indonesian citizen is required to report the religion they adhere to as part of the personal data that must be reported.

In the Indonesian context mentioned above, this study's findings align with the concept that conservative individuals tend to seek cognitive clarity (Jost & Krochik, 2014). A conservative identity is often associated with efforts to maintain traditional values and social stability, often leading to a preference for clarity and firmness in worldview, for example, in the context of personal identification in Indonesia, religious information is included; this can be said to clarify behavior (such as how funeral processions and other rituals are carried out according to each religion adhered to). Attachment to established values and beliefs can become part of a conservative identity, influencing an individual's attitudes and behavior toward political and social issues. In Summar, acquiring ideology (conservatism) through epistemic needs can contribute to forming identity fusion, where individuals feel closely tied to specific groups or ideologies as part of their broader identity.

In practical domain, we can see how the need for certainty and structure intertwined with one's spirituality and identity. Women who wear hijab find more meaning in their life when they also feel spiritual (Junaidin, Abdul-Latief & Kahar, 2022), implying that they may be able to fuse better with their identity as hijabi Muslim when they resonate well with the ideological narratives behind it. Spiritual and religious motivation also positively correlated with vertical transcendence among Muslim who visited sacred places (Baidun et al., 2023), leisure activity that directed towards identity affirmation and fusion. Moreover, students or santri in Islamic boading schools have been found to be obedient to the rules as the implication of their academic commitment (Hutahean, Pertiwi & Thamrin, 2023), an indicative example how their academic goals infused in their fusion towards the identity of being a santri.

This dynamic also aligns with shared reality theory, which refers to the concept that individuals collectively create and maintain a shared understanding of their world, including norms, values, and beliefs. In this research, shared reality theory can describe how epistemic needs, religious, political

ideology, and identity fusion are interrelated and contribute to forming a shared understanding that binds individuals in a group or community. Epistemic needs, or the desire for a stable and certain understanding of the world, drive individuals to seek information and a cohesive framework for managing uncertainty. This can be reflected in how individuals create and maintain shared understandings of religious beliefs and political ideologies, which become part of their group identity (Milla et al., 2019). Furthermore, identity fusion refers to a psychological experience where individuals feel emotionally and psychologically tied to a particular group or ideology. In the context of shared reality, identity fusion creates a powerful shared experience among group members, where they experience a shared understanding of their group's values, beliefs, and goals (Vignoles et al., 2019).

Research shows that epistemic needs, religious, political ideology, and identity fusion are interrelated and can be integral to forming a shared understanding that binds individuals in a group or community (Swann et al., 2012). In the context of shared reality, individuals with high epistemic needs tend to seek a cohesive understanding of their world, which may include adopting a religious political ideology consistent with their beliefs and values. This can then strengthen the experience of identity fusion among group members who share those beliefs and values, resulting in a strong shared understanding of their world and their role in the community.

This research provides a better understanding of the relationship between feelings of uncertainty, ideology, and identity fusion. This research demonstrates the tendency of individuals who need certainty to adopt or adhere to a particular ideology/group, which in turn encourages them to merge/identify with the ideology or group they refer to. Future researchers should consider using a longitudinal design to establish causal relationships between epistemic needs, ideology adoption, and identity fusion, as well as expanding the sample to include more diverse populations for greater generalizability. Experimental methods, such as manipulating uncertainty or exposure to ideological narratives, could further clarify these mechanisms. Additionally, examining different types of ideologies—beyond religious contexts—may reveal broader applicability of the findings. The results of this research can assist in developing strategies to manage uncertainty and increase understanding of group identity. In addition, this research can also informatively assist in the development of intervention programs to reduce conflict between groups. Considering the study's cross-sectional design, the findings cannot explain causal effects. Through this research, we conclude that the epistemic needs of individuals encourage them to adopt a particular ideology or group to satisfy these needs, which in turn encourages the fusion of individual identities into the ideology or group they hold.

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