



Revitalizing Social Solidarity: Addressing the Community Crisis in Meritocratic Societies

Ernestus Holivil^{1*}; Laurensius Petrus Sayrani²; I Putu Yoga Bumi Pradana³

¹ Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang

² Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang

³ Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang

*Corresponding Author: ernestus_holivil@staf.undana.ac.id

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Abstract: *This article examines the crisis of social solidarity in meritocratic societies, which is driven by increasing social inequality and individualism. While meritocracy ideally ensures equal opportunities for all individuals, in practice, it often deepens social disparities and weakens communal bonds. This study aims to explore how the revitalization of social solidarity can serve as a solution to the fragmentation caused by meritocratic systems. Using a theoretical approach based on communitarianism, this article analyzes various strategies to strengthen social ties, such as community engagement, social capital development, and inclusive policy reforms. The findings indicate that social solidarity can be restored through active participation in community activities, increased involvement in broader social networks, and the implementation of policies that balance individual achievements with collective interests. Thus, revitalizing social solidarity is not only essential in addressing the negative impacts of meritocracy but also in fostering a more just and inclusive society.*

Keywords: *Social Solidarity, Meritocracy, Communitarianism, Social Inequality, Community Engagement.*

Introduction

Meritocracy is a social system that has long been regarded as upholding justice and equal opportunity. Based on the principle that everyone has the same chance to achieve success, meritocracy is often praised as a fair mechanism. However, behind this idealism, the system can actually exacerbate social inequality. Individual failure is often perceived as a lack of effort or talent, without considering the structural factors that limit access to opportunities. As a result, lower- and middle-class groups frequently feel marginalized despite their hard work.¹

This phenomenon not only creates economic disparities but also fosters social divisions between those who succeed and those deemed to have failed. Polarization intensifies when meritocracy erodes social empathy, framing success as a personal responsibility while disregarding the collective dimensions of individual achievement.² This condition weakens social solidarity and exacerbates the sense of injustice

¹ Anatolia Batruch et al., "Belief in School Meritocracy and the Legitimization of Social and Income Inequality," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 14, no. 5 (2023): 621–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506221111017>.

² Karlijn LA Roex, Tim Huijts, and Inge Sieben, "Attitudes towards Income Inequality: 'Winners' versus 'Losers' of the Perceived Meritocracy," *Acta Sociologica* 62, no. 1 (2018): 47–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699317748340>.

within society. In this context, exploring the revitalization of social solidarity within a meritocratic system becomes relevant in addressing increasingly complex social challenges and ensuring that justice is not merely a slogan but a tangible reality for all social strata.

Meritocratic societies face a crisis of social solidarity due to the inequalities generated by this system. Individuals who do not belong to the successful group often feel marginalized and lose their sense of belonging within their communities. Social disparities become more pronounced when failure is viewed solely as a lack of effort or talent, without considering structural factors such as access to education, resources, and economic opportunities.³ This perspective further deepens the divide between those who succeed and those deemed to have failed, fostering a sense of alienation that ultimately weakens social cohesion.

To address this crisis, it is crucial to revive the values of togetherness and strengthen community solidarity. The individualism exacerbated by meritocracy must be counterbalanced with policies and social programs that emphasize mutual support and inclusivity. A just society can only be realized through concrete efforts to strengthen social networks and ensure that success is not solely measured by individual achievements but also by collective contributions in creating equal opportunities for all.

Although the impact of meritocracy on social inequality has been extensively studied, there remains a gap in understanding how this system erodes social solidarity. Most previous research has focused on the effects of meritocracy on economic inequality and social mobility,⁴ while relatively few studies have examined how meritocracy widens social divides by diminishing the sense of community. The emphasis on individual achievement within meritocratic systems often leads to deep social fragmentation, yet this aspect has received limited attention in academic studies.

Furthermore, while scholars such as Sandel (2020) have highlighted the importance of communitarianism in addressing inequality,⁵ research connecting this concept to concrete strategies for restoring social solidarity in meritocratic societies remains scarce. Therefore, this article seeks to fill this gap by exploring practical solutions to reinforce social bonds. By focusing on social policies and community programs rooted in solidarity, this analysis aims to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and just society.

This article aims to examine how the revitalization of social solidarity can serve as a solution to the community crisis in meritocratic societies. Specifically, this article explores the application of communitarianism as a means to strengthen social bonds that have been fragmented due to meritocracy. The primary focus of this study is to evaluate policies and social practices that can support the reinforcement of solidarity while also analyzing their impact on widening social inequalities.

The scope of this paper includes societies with strong meritocratic systems, particularly in countries with capitalist economies and highly competitive educational systems. However, the findings of this study

³ Céline Darnon, Annique Smeding, and Sandrine Redersdorff, "Belief in School Meritocracy as an Ideological Barrier to the Promotion of Equality," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 48, no. 4 (2018): 523–34, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2347>.

⁴ Batruch et al., "Belief in School Meritocracy and the Legitimization of Social and Income Inequality."; Roex, Huijts, and Sieben, "Attitudes towards Income Inequality: 'Winners' versus 'Losers' of the Perceived Meritocracy."

⁵ Michael J. Sandel, "Populism, Liberalism, and Democracy," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 44, no. 4 (2018): 353–359, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718757888>.

may not be fully generalizable to different social contexts. Additionally, while this paper proposes practical solutions for rebuilding social solidarity, their real-world implementation may face various challenges that require further approaches to ensure effective application.

Meritocracy and Its Impact on Social Solidarity

Meritocracy, as a social system, emphasizes the recognition of individuals based on their abilities, talents, and efforts. Its goal is to create equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of social background. However, while meritocracy appears fair in theory, its implementation often deepens social inequality and accelerates societal fragmentation. This system tends to overlook structural barriers that prevent individuals from lower socioeconomic groups from competing on an equal footing.⁶

The concept of meritocracy was first introduced by Michael Young in his satirical essay in 1958, which actually criticized the claim that this system could achieve social justice. Young warned that meritocracy risked evolving into a new oligarchy, where successful groups maintain dominance over others.⁷ Meritocratic principles such as equal opportunity and reward based on achievement often clash with the reality of social inequality, which hampers mobility for those with limited access to education and resources.⁸

One of the primary consequences of meritocracy is the reinforcement of existing social inequality. Mijs (2019) explains that belief in meritocracy is often correlated with increasing income disparities.⁹ Social status and wealth are perceived as purely the result of individual effort rather than structural factors. This perspective widens the gap between those considered "winners" and "losers" in the meritocratic system. Success is attributed to personal merit, while failure is blamed on a lack of effort or talent.¹⁰

The consequence of this mindset is the neglect of external factors that play a crucial role in an individual's success or failure, such as access to quality education and equal employment opportunities. By turning a blind eye to structural barriers, meritocracy not only deepens inequality but also hinders efforts to create more just social change. As a result, this system reinforces the status quo and obstructs reforms that could provide more equitable opportunities for all social strata.

Beyond exacerbating inequality, meritocracy also fosters individualism, which further weakens social solidarity. Heuer et al. (2020) highlight that the meritocratic ethos emphasizes personal responsibility and individual achievement, encouraging people to focus more on personal success rather than collective well-being.¹¹ In this system, a person's worth is primarily measured by individual accomplishments, while social principles such as cooperation and concern for others become increasingly marginalized.

⁶ Sandel.

⁷ Ismanto, Sjafari, and Listyaningsih, "Money and Family Matter: Political Recruitment in the Golongan Karya Party of Banten Province," in *Iapa Proceedings Conference*, 2019, 357–69, <https://doi.org/10.30589/proceedings.2019.245>.

⁸ Batruch et al., "Belief in School Meritocracy and the Legitimization of Social and Income Inequality."

⁹ Jonathan J. B. Mijs, "The Unfulfillable Promise of Meritocracy: Three Lessons and Their Implications for Justice in Education," *Social Justice Research* 29 (2016): 14–34, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-014-0228-0>.

¹⁰ Satoshi Araki, "Beyond 'Imagined Meritocracy': Distinguishing the Relative Power of Education and Skills in Intergenerational Inequality," *Sociology* 57, no. 4 (2023): 975–992.

¹¹ Jan-ocko Heuer et al., "Legitimizing Inequality," *Comparative Sociology* 19 (2020): 542–84, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691330-bja10017>.

Consequently, social relationships within society become strained, and the potential for collective action to address social inequality diminishes. When individuals are more oriented toward personal achievement, the willingness to support those facing difficulties declines. The social environment becomes more competitive and exclusive, hindering efforts to build a more inclusive and just society.

Education plays a key role in sustaining the impact of meritocracy on social inequality. Batruch et al. (2022) highlight that belief in meritocracy within education serves as an ideological barrier that reinforces existing social hierarchies. When academic achievement is perceived as purely the result of individual effort, structural factors such as socioeconomic background tend to be overlooked.¹² This perspective strengthens social stratification by disregarding the reality that not all individuals have equal access to quality educational resources.

This disparity is most evident in access to higher education. Students from more privileged backgrounds tend to have better opportunities, while those from lower socioeconomic groups face greater barriers. As a result, the education system no longer functions as a vehicle for social mobility but instead becomes a tool for reproducing inequality, thereby hindering social change. Without policy interventions that take structural factors into account, meritocracy in education further deepens social injustice in society.

The concept of monocentric meritocracy, as proposed by Tan (2024), highlights that the definition of merit is often determined by the dominant group. In practice, this tends to favor individuals from more privileged backgrounds, reinforcing existing cycles of inequality. Those with access to resources and power networks find it easier to meet established merit standards, while individuals from marginalized groups are often excluded.¹³

As a result, the system not only fails to create social justice but also exacerbates inequality by restricting disadvantaged groups' access to opportunities that should be available to all. With a narrow and exclusive definition of merit, social hierarchies become further entrenched, and opportunities for social mobility become increasingly limited. This suggests that without reforms in the way meritocracy is implemented, the system may serve more as a mechanism for preserving the status quo rather than as a tool for promoting equality and inclusivity.

To counter the negative effects of meritocracy, strategies that strengthen social solidarity and reduce disparities are needed. One effective approach is fostering a culture of empathy and collective responsibility through community engagement. By encouraging participation in social services and collaborative projects, societies can reinforce social bonds and cultivate a shared sense of belonging and purpose.¹⁴ These initiatives not only help mitigate excessive individualism but also create spaces for more inclusive and supportive social interactions.

Additionally, education reform focused on inclusivity and equitable access can be a crucial step in addressing the inequalities perpetuated by meritocratic systems. Policies that provide support for students

¹² Batruch et al., "Belief in School Meritocracy and the Legitimization of Social and Income Inequality."

¹³ Petrus Tan and Oktovianus Kosat, "Meritocracy, the Reproduction of Inequality, and the Academic Scandal in Indonesia: Philosophical Perspective of Michael Sandel," *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Review* 7, no. 1 (2024): 154–68, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ijerr.v7i1.66253%0AMeritocracy>.

¹⁴ Hanjin Lee, "The Role of Civic Education to Overcome the Limitations of Meritocracy," *Korean Association For Learner-Centered Curriculum And Instruction* 23, no. 9 (2023): 607–22, <https://doi.org/10.22251/jlcci.2023.23.9.607>.

from disadvantaged backgrounds can expand opportunities for success and make social mobility more attainable.¹⁵ This approach not only increases access to educational resources but also reduces structural barriers that hinder mobility, ensuring that meritocracy is implemented in a fairer and more just manner.

The Role of Community in Addressing Social Crises

Communitarianism is a political philosophy that emphasizes the role of community and social relationships in shaping individual identity and moral considerations. One of the leading thinkers in this school of thought, Michael Sandel, critiques the liberal tradition for prioritizing individual rights and personal autonomy to an excessive degree. According to him, this perspective tends to overlook the social contexts that influence a person's values and decisions. Sandel argues that individuals cannot be separated from their communities, as their identity and moral choices are profoundly shaped by the social relationships and environments in which they develop.¹⁶

This communitarian approach offers an alternative perspective on meritocracy. While meritocratic paradigms focus solely on individual achievement, they fail to consider the social factors that also contribute to a person's success. By emphasizing the importance of social bonds and community solidarity, communitarianism presents a solution to the social crisis caused by an overly competitive and individualistic meritocracy. In this context, building inclusive and supportive communities becomes essential in addressing social inequalities and strengthening societal cohesion.

One of the core principles of communitarianism is the role of community in shaping individual identity. Michael Sandel argues that a person's identity is not formed independently but rather through social interactions and cultural influences. This view challenges the liberal perspective, which considers individuals as pre-social entities who join society based solely on rational agreements.¹⁷ In other words, according to Sandel, individuals cannot be separated from their communities, as social values and norms play a fundamental role in shaping their character and moral choices.

Within this framework, morality and ethics cannot be understood in isolation from the social context that shapes them. Every political philosophy, including meritocracy, must consider the shared values that bind individuals within a particular community. Without acknowledging the role of community, social systems tend to overlook the crucial aspects of solidarity and social cohesion. Communitarianism offers a more holistic perspective in understanding identity and morality by emphasizing the importance of tradition and social relationships in individuals' lives.¹⁸

¹⁵ Darnon, Smeding, and Redersdorff, "Belief in School Meritocracy as an Ideological Barrier to the Promotion of Equality."

¹⁶ Mai Thi Hong Lien et al., "Michael Sandel's Conception of Community," *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 33, no. 4 (2022): 40–47, <https://doi.org/10.9734/AJESS/2022/v33i4715>; Sandel, "Populism, Liberalism, and Democracy."; Ruud Koopmans and Michael Zürn, "Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism – How Globalization Is Reshaping Politics in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Struggle Over Borders. Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism*, ed. Wilde et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108652698.001%0AThis>.

¹⁷ Koopmans and Zürn, "Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism – How Globalization Is Reshaping Politics in the Twenty-First Century."

¹⁸ Andrew Tsz Wan Hung, "A Case for Communitarian Meritocracy: A Critical Engagement with Michael Sandel," *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 9 (2023): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-023-00375-z>; Malcolm Elliott Glover,

Communitarianism criticizes the dominance of individualistic perspectives in modern societies, which tend to weaken social solidarity. Michael Sandel stresses that excessive focus on individual rights can diminish the sense of responsibility toward others, creating a fragmented society that lacks concern for collective well-being.¹⁹ In a meritocratic system, where success is often regarded as a purely individual effort, social solidarity becomes increasingly marginalized. As a consequence, individuals are more likely to attribute failure to a lack of effort or talent, without considering the structural factors that influence opportunities.

To address these challenges, concrete efforts are needed to restore social bonds and build solidarity based on collective well-being. Approaches that emphasize collective responsibility can serve as solutions to counterbalance the impact of individualism within meritocratic systems. By promoting values of mutual support and shared success, society can develop a better understanding that achievements are not solely dependent on personal effort but also on fair social structures and equal access to opportunities.

One of the key implications of communitarianism in addressing the challenges posed by meritocracy and individualism is the need to strengthen social bonds within society. Sandel argues that to overcome the solidarity crisis caused by an overemphasis on individual achievement, a greater focus on interdependence and shared responsibility is necessary.²⁰ By recognizing that individual success is not independent of social support and structural opportunities, society can rebuild stronger and more inclusive solidarity.

Strengthening social solidarity can begin by encouraging individuals to acknowledge their interconnectedness with others and their moral responsibility toward collective well-being. Social solidarity is not merely an abstract value but also an effective tool to counter social fragmentation and enhance societal cohesion amidst the inequalities exacerbated by meritocratic systems.²¹ By cultivating a culture that prioritizes collaboration and care, communitarianism can serve as a solution in creating a more just and inclusive society.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of social solidarity, communitarianism also highlights the role of civic participation in strengthening societal cohesion. Michael Sandel advocates for active engagement in community life through public deliberation, volunteer work, and participation in local governance. Such involvement not only fosters stronger social relationships but also cultivates a shared sense of purpose, which can help communities address collective challenges.²² In meritocratic societies that tend to prioritize individual achievement, civic participation can serve as a means to reduce feelings of alienation and strengthen social connections between individuals.

“Leading across Cultural Borders: A Communitarian Approach to Global Development,” *International Journal of Public Leadership* 12, no. 2 (2016): 154–66, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPL-11-2015-0028>.

¹⁹ Dan Zahavi, “Individuality and Community: The Limits of Social Constructivism,” *Ethos* 50, no. 4 (2022): 392–409, <https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.12364>.

²⁰ Sandel, “Populism, Liberalism, and Democracy.”

²¹ Glover, “Leading across Cultural Borders: A Communitarian Approach to Global Development.”; Otto Gusti Madung, “Krisis Demokrasi Dan Tirani Meritokrasi Menurut Michael Sandel,” *Jurnal Ledalero* 19, no. 2 (2020): 127–44, <http://dx.doi.org/10.31385/jl.v19i2.212.127-144>.

²² Glover, “Leading across Cultural Borders: A Communitarian Approach to Global Development.”

Communitarianism also offers a more inclusive approach to addressing social inequality. By recognizing that individuals are shaped by their communities, this philosophy supports policies that promote social justice and equal opportunities. Concrete measures, such as redistributive policies that ensure more equitable access to resources and opportunities, can strengthen social solidarity and help build a more inclusive society.²³ Thus, communitarianism not only underscores the importance of collective values but also encourages tangible actions to create a fairer and more just society.

Overall, communitarianism, as articulated by Michael Sandel, provides valuable insights into reinforcing social solidarity in response to the challenges posed by meritocracy. By emphasizing the role of community in shaping individual identity and values, this approach seeks to counteract social isolation, which often emerges in societies that overemphasize individual achievements. This philosophy serves as a reminder that personal success cannot be separated from the broader social context, highlighting the necessity of togetherness and interdependence as integral components of social order.

To restore social solidarity, which has been increasingly eroded, societies must revive values of togetherness, collective responsibility, and active participation in community life. By strengthening social engagement and ensuring more equitable access to opportunities and resources, communitarianism can serve as an effective alternative in fostering a more inclusive and just society. This approach is not merely a philosophical discourse but also offers practical solutions for societies seeking to address the adverse effects of individualism and inequality exacerbated by meritocracy.

Revitalizing Social Solidarity: A Solution to the Community Crisis

Revitalizing social solidarity in societies fragmented by meritocracy requires concrete steps to strengthen community engagement, enhance social capital, and promote inclusivity. Based on the author's analysis, effective strategies include active participation in social activities, the development of broader social networks, and increased individual involvement in community-based initiatives. These measures aim to reduce social isolation, rebuild a sense of togetherness, and create more inclusive spaces for all segments of society.

Community involvement initiatives serve as one of the most effective strategies for reinforcing social bonds in fragmented societies. Various activities, such as volunteer programs, environmental clean-ups, or fundraising initiatives, can unite individuals from diverse social backgrounds and strengthen their sense of belonging. Participation in community activities, particularly through volunteer work, not only enhances social well-being but also fosters a sense of connection and shared purpose, which is essential for reinforcing social solidarity.²⁴

By encouraging engagement in social activities, communities can strengthen relationships among their members and cultivate a culture of mutual support. Active involvement in community initiatives creates inclusive spaces for social interaction, reduces social disparities, and fosters empathy among

²³ Madung, "Krisis Demokrasi Dan Tirani Meritokrasi Menurut Michael Sandel."; Hung, "A Case for Communitarian Meritocracy: A Critical Engagement with Michael Sandel."

²⁴ Clémence Vannier et al., "Strengthening Community Connection and Personal Well-Being through Volunteering in New Zealand," *Health and Social Care in the Community* 29, no. 6 (2021): 1971–1979, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13340>.

individuals. Thus, strengthening community-based initiatives is a crucial step in addressing social challenges and building a more cohesive and just society.

Beyond community engagement, building social capital through extensive social networks is a key factor in reinforcing social solidarity, particularly for marginalized groups. Cao et al. (2023) highlight the critical role of weak ties—social connections that bridge individuals from diverse backgrounds—in facilitating social mobility and broader societal integration.²⁵ These connections provide individuals with access to new opportunities and expand their perspectives through interactions with different social groups.

By organizing cross-community interaction events, individuals can build social networks that transcend socioeconomic barriers. Broader connections not only strengthen social bonds but also create a more inclusive and supportive environment. When people have access to diverse social networks, they can share resources, opportunities, and emotional support, resulting in a more resilient and sustainable sense of social solidarity.

In the healthcare sector, the concept of social prescribing plays a crucial role in building social solidarity. This approach connects individuals with long-term health conditions to community resources and social activities that enhance their well-being. For example, in some countries, health professionals refer patients with mental health issues to community support groups or cultural activities as part of their recovery process.²⁶ This strategy not only aids medical recovery but also increases individuals' social participation within their communities. By reducing social isolation and stigma, social prescriptions reinforce a sense of belonging and foster collective well-being.

Beyond community involvement in social activities, collaboration with the business sector also plays a crucial role in strengthening social solidarity. Corporate volunteer programs serve as a bridge between businesses and society, where employee engagement in social initiatives enhances social capital and reinforces corporate social responsibility (CSR).²⁷ In Indonesia, many companies initiate CSR programs, such as scholarship programs and microfinance assistance for local communities. These initiatives not only benefit underprivileged individuals but also build strong connections between businesses and society, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting more inclusive social development. By encouraging business sector involvement in community-based programs, companies can act as social agents that reduce inequality and foster long-term social cohesion.

To further strengthen business sector engagement in supporting social solidarity, technology plays a crucial role in fostering stronger social relationships. Social media, for instance, can be used as a tool to facilitate family and community interactions on a larger scale. Online platforms enable individuals to discuss issues, share information, and provide support to one another in facing social challenges. For example, after natural disasters, online communities often emerge as fundraising platforms and information hubs for disaster recovery efforts. When used wisely, social media can become an effective tool for

²⁵ Lin Cao, John Smith, and Richard Thompson, *Social Capital and Inequality: Perspectives from Global Case Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

²⁶ Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot, eds., *Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts. 2nd Edition* (Copenhagen: World Health Organization, 2003).

²⁷ Aldona Glińska-Neweś and Joanna Górka, "Capabilities of Corporate Volunteering in Strengthening Social Capital," *Sustainability* 12 (2020): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12187482>.

reinforcing social solidarity, particularly in societies increasingly influenced by meritocratic and individualistic values.²⁸

Beyond technology, inclusive cultural activities play a significant role in reinforcing social bonds, particularly in diverse societies. Cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and traditional celebrations enhance social cohesion by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds within the same space.²⁹ By celebrating diversity and promoting cross-cultural interactions, these activities help foster mutual understanding and collective identity. For instance, the Asmat Cultural Festival in Papua not only serves as a platform for preserving cultural heritage but also provides a space for dialogue among various communities to strengthen their social relationships. Thus, arts and culture function as powerful bridges for building more inclusive and harmonious social solidarity.

This process can strengthen intergenerational relationships, connecting younger and older community members to create a more inclusive social network. Programs that bridge generational divides can foster mutual understanding and provide reciprocal support across different age groups. By facilitating closer interactions between younger generations and the elderly, a space for sharing experiences, knowledge, and social values is created, enriching community life.

In Japan, for instance, many schools run partnership programs between students and seniors in nursing homes, where they engage in skill-sharing, life experience discussions, and social activities together. This initiative not only strengthens social bonds but also helps reduce loneliness among the elderly, while fostering empathy and respect for older generations among young people.³⁰ Implementing similar programs in various societal contexts can bridge generational gaps, create stronger solidarity, and build more inclusive and harmonious communities.

In different parts of the world, social solidarity takes various forms, shaped by economic conditions, public policies, and cultural values. In Sweden, for example, a strong welfare state model operates through high-tax schemes to ensure universal access to healthcare, education, and social security. This model fosters a strong sense of collective belonging and contributes to low-income inequality.³¹

Conversely, Brazil faces significant economic inequality, with more than 25% of its population living below the poverty line in 2019.³² However, grassroots social movements, such as the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), have played a crucial role in fostering social solidarity by advocating for economic justice and improved livelihoods for poor farmers.³³ Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the traditional gotong royong (mutual cooperation) spirit remains a pillar of social solidarity. Programs such as National Health Insurance (JKN) have reinforced solidarity by ensuring universal healthcare access.

²⁸ Barge Gul Khalili, Rahima Qargha, and Tamanna Quraishi, "The Influence of Social Media Networks on Families Dynamics: Opportunities and Challenges," *APLIKATIF Journal of Research Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–11.

²⁹ Muhammad Rafsanjani Zainal et al., "The Relationship Between Humanity Values and Religious Tolerance for Strengthening The Social Cohesion of Urban Communities in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Techno-Social* 14, no. 1 (2022): 56–65, <https://doi.org/10.30880/jts.2022.14.01.008>.

³⁰ Hao Cao, "Organizing an 'Organizationless' Protest Campaign in the WeChatsphere," *Big Data and Society* 9, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517221078823>.

³¹ World Bank, "Gini Index - Sweden," 2020.

³² World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Brief: Brazil," 2019.

³³ World Bank.

However, challenges remain in service distribution, particularly in remote areas (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2022). These differing approaches demonstrate that social solidarity can evolve through various mechanisms, tailored to each country's socioeconomic and cultural context.

An analysis of different models of social solidarity reveals that no single approach can be universally applied. Countries with strong welfare policies can foster social solidarity through structured systems supported by government regulations. In contrast, in nations with high levels of inequality, such as Brazil and Indonesia, social solidarity tends to develop through community-based initiatives. Therefore, strategies to strengthen social solidarity must be tailored to each country's unique social, economic, and cultural context to effectively address its specific challenges.

Ultimately, engaging all segments of society and strengthening local governance through participatory decision-making are crucial steps in revitalizing social solidarity. Initiatives like participatory budgeting provide citizens with direct input on resource allocation, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.³⁴ This approach not only enhances transparency in resource management but also encourages active participation in community development. By strengthening social cohesion and fostering deeper connections among community members, these measures can pave the way for a more just, interconnected, and compassionate society, where collective well-being takes precedence over purely individual success.

Conclusion

In addressing community crises caused by meritocratic systems, governments and societies must work together to reinforce social solidarity. One practical recommendation for governments is to design more inclusive and equitable policies, such as education programs that provide equal access to all social groups, and redistributive policies that reduce social and economic disparities. Additionally, community engagement programs that facilitate cross-community collaboration are essential for fostering a sense of belonging and expanding social networks. Moreover, enhancing public participation in decision-making processes—through mechanisms such as participatory budgeting or forums involving diverse societal elements—can strengthen collective responsibility and increase transparency in local governance. By ensuring that all community members have a voice, these initiatives contribute to a more democratic and inclusive governance structure.

On the other hand, society can leverage the principles of social solidarity to drive inclusive and just social change by emphasizing cooperation, empathy, and appreciation for diversity. Creating spaces for dialogue between different groups—through social, cultural, or political activities—can help reduce tensions and build more harmonious relationships. Additionally, it is crucial for communities to educate themselves on the structural factors that contribute to inequality, so that success is not solely measured by individual achievements but also by the collective well-being of society. Shifting the societal mindset from

³⁴ Mijalche Santa, Anita Ciunova Shuleska, and Nikolina Palamidovska Sterjadovska, "Understanding Social Capital in Community-Driven Ride Sharing: Lessons from a Developing Country," *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries* 91, no. 1 (2025): e12347, <https://doi.org/10.1002/isd2.12347>.

an individual-centric perspective to a community-focused approach is vital in counteracting the divisive effects of meritocracy.

The long-term aspiration in building a more solidary and just society is to create a more inclusive and equitable social environment. Every individual, regardless of socioeconomic background, should have equal opportunities for growth and success. A society that prioritizes collective well-being over individual success will be able to foster a supportive community, rather than one fragmented by the individualism cultivated by meritocratic systems. In the long run, this approach will contribute to a society that is not only fair in terms of opportunities but also strong in social bonds, capable of facing social and economic challenges collectively. By reinforcing social solidarity, inclusive governance, and community-driven initiatives, societies can reshape their structures to promote greater equity, mutual support, and long-term social cohesion.

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