

# Conversion to Islam as a Strategy for Legalizing Marriage: Experiences of Interfaith Couples in East Jakarta

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**Abstract:** This study aims to find out and understand the phenomenon of Islamic conversion mode that occurs in interfaith marriages in Indonesia, focusing on five couples who pretend to convert to Islam to meet the legal requirements for marriage with Muslim women. In five cases, after the marriage, all five couples return to their original religions, thus creating inequality and dilemmas for the couples involved. This research uses field research through a legal anthropological approach to discover how legal norms interact with social and cultural practices. The findings of this study show that there is a practice of pretense, where one of the couples pretends to convert to Islam before marriage to carry out the marriage. After the marriage, one of the couples returned to their original religion. This phenomenon describes a pattern of behavior that causes dilemmas and inequalities in the realm of religion in the context of marriage. This article proposes the need for further research to understand the impact and implications of the mode of conversion to Islam, as well as to design policies that protect women's rights and freedoms in the realm of religion and marriage. Public awareness and policy support supporting equality are essential to create a fair and equitable environment.

**Keywords:** *Mode of converting to Islam; interfaith marriage; legal formal law*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan memahami fenomena modus masuk Islam yang terjadi dalam perkawinan beda agama di Indonesia, dengan fokus pada lima pasangan yang berpura-pura masuk Islam untuk memenuhi syarat legal perkawinan dengan perempuan Muslim. Dalam lima kasus, setelah perkawinan terjadi, kelima pasangan kembali ke agamanya semula, sehingga menciptakan ketidaksetaraan dan dilema bagi pasangan yang terlibat. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi lapangan (*field research*) melalui pendekatan antropologi hukum yakni untuk mengetahui bagaimana norma-norma hukum berinteraksi dengan praktik sosial dan budaya di masyarakat. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa adanya praktik kepura-puraan, di mana salah satu pasangan berpura-pura masuk Islam sebelum menikah agar dapat melaksanakan perkawinan. Setelah perkawinan terjadi, salah satu pasangan kemudian kembali

pada agamanya semula. Fenomena ini menggambarkan pola perilaku yang menimbulkan dilema dan ketidaksetaraan dalam ranah agama dalam konteks perkawinan. Artikel ini mengusulkan perlunya penelitian lebih lanjut untuk memahami dampak dan implikasi dari modus masuk Islam, serta untuk merancang kebijakan yang melindungi hak dan kebebasan perempuan dalam ranah agama dan perkawinan.

**Kata kunci:** *modus masuk Islam; perkawinan beda agama; legal formal hukum*

## Introduction

Religious conversion in interfaith marriages still occurs among world-renowned artists,<sup>1</sup> including famous Indonesian celebrities.<sup>2</sup> Although it had caused debate, the reality was that after marriage, their lives continued to run harmoniously even though some were divorced.<sup>3</sup> Cases of interfaith marriages in Indonesia, especially between individuals who adhere to Islam and couples with different beliefs (non-Islamic), become an accurate illustration of social and cultural dynamics in society. This phenomenon involves various groups, including officials, artists, and business people, which shows that differences in beliefs are no longer a significant obstacle in romantic relationships.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Akanksha Bhatia, "Amid Talks Of 'Love Jihad', 22 Celeb Couples Whose Interfaith Marriages Prove Love Transcends All," [www.scoopwhoop.com](https://www.scoopwhoop.com/entertainment/amid-tanishq-row-22-celebrity-couples-who-s-interfaith-marriage-proves-that-love-transcends-all/), 2020, <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/entertainment/amid-tanishq-row-22-celebrity-couples-who-s-interfaith-marriage-proves-that-love-transcends-all/>; Bombay Times, "From Dipika Kakar-Shoaib Ibrahim to Vivian Dsena and Nouran Aly: TV Celebs Who Had an Interfaith Marriage," [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tv/news/hindi/from-dipika-kakar-shoaib-ibrahim-to-vivian-dsena-and-nouran-aly-tv-celebs-who-had-an-interfaith-marriage/photostory/101234686.cms), 2023, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tv/news/hindi/from-dipika-kakar-shoaib-ibrahim-to-vivian-dsena-and-nouran-aly-tv-celebs-who-had-an-interfaith-marriage/photostory/101234686.cms>.

<sup>2</sup> Rezki Maidasmi and Saiful Amin, "The Phenomena of Different Religion Marriage Among Artists; Perspective Texture of Verses Ahkam (Muhammad Ali Ash-Shabuni)," *GIC Proceeding 1* (2023): 425–35.

<sup>3</sup> Dedi, "7 Pasangan Artis Nikah Beda Agama Tapi Berujung Cerai, Terbaru Yeyen Lidy," [viva.co.id](https://www.viva.co.id/showbiz/gossip/1598772-7-pasangan-artis-nikah-beda-agama-tapi-berujung-cerai-terbaru-yeyen-lidy), 2023, <https://www.viva.co.id/showbiz/gossip/1598772-7-pasangan-artis-nikah-beda-agama-tapi-berujung-cerai-terbaru-yeyen-lidy>.

<sup>4</sup> Zaki Islami, "5 Artis Indonesia Menikah Beda Agama, No 4 Sudah 27 Tahun Bersama Harus Cerai," [viva.co.id](https://www.viva.co.id), 2023,

The phenomenon of religious conversion, which is not only experienced by celebrities but also widespread among the general public,<sup>5</sup> reflects the complexity of religious dynamics in modern life. This conversion is often triggered by various factors, including weak belief in the religion adhered to, which may be caused by dissatisfaction or incompatibility with the teachings of the religion followed.<sup>6</sup> In addition, relationships with couples with different beliefs are often a strong reason behind the decision to change religions, both as a form of compromise and an attempt to create harmony in life.<sup>7</sup> In Indonesia, the issue of religious conversion is increasingly complicated when it comes to interfaith marriage.<sup>8</sup> This kind of restriction on marriage applies not only to Islam but also to other religions. This is further emphasized by the Supreme Court

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<https://www.viva.co.id/showbiz/gossip/1596718-5-artis-indonesia-menikah-beda-agama-no-4-sudah-27-tahun-bersama-harus-cerai>. See too: Chairul Fikri, "Tetap Rukun Dan Kompak, 8 Artis Ini Nikah Beda Agama," *beritasatu.com*, 2023, <https://www.beritasatu.com/lifestyle/1023735/tetap-rukun-dan-kompak-8-artis-ini-nikah-beda-agama>; Dedi, "Nafa Urbach Ungkap Alasan Pilih Pindah Agama," *viva.co.id*, 2022, <https://www.viva.co.id/showbiz/gossip/1541190-nafa-urbach-ungkap-alasan-pilih-pindah-agama>; Kholisin Susanto, "Asmirandah Pilih Murtad Dan Pindah Agama Kristen, Ini Alasannya," 2023, <https://bandung.viva.co.id/berita-artis/19554-asmirandah-pilih-murtad-dan-pindah-agama-kristen-ini-alasannya>; Yazir Farouk, "Kriss Hatta Mualaf Demi Nikahi Hilda Vitria: Gue Korbankan Keimanan," *suara.com*, n.d., <https://www.suara.com/entertainment/2020/12/24/153534/kriss-hatta-mualaf-demi-nikahi-hilda-vitria-gue-korbankan-keimanan?page=all>. See Fabbiola Irawan, "5 Fakta Jono Armstrong Putuskan Bolak-Balik Pindah Agama, No. 4 Gempar," *intipseleb.com*, 2022, <https://www.intipseleb.com/lokal/27288-5-fakta-jono-armstrong-putuskan-bolak-balik-pindah-agama>.

<sup>5</sup> Fransiska Widyawati, "When Love and Faith Collide: Women's Conversion to Husband's Religion in Flores," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 335–58.

<sup>6</sup> Yoachim Agus Tridiatno, "Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Looking for a Loophole," *Jurnal Teologi* 12, no. 2 (2023): 199–220.

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Syatar et al., "Interfaith Marriage Phenomenon in Indonesia from the Perspective of Sadd Al-Ẓarī'ah and Fath Al-Ẓarī'ah," *FITRAH: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2023): 19–38.

<sup>8</sup> Zubaidi Sujiman, "Interfaith Marriage Perspective of Positive Law and Islamic Law in Indonesia," *Yudisia: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 15, no. 1 (2024): 125–36.

Circular Letter No. 2 of 2023, often called "SEMA No. 2 of 2023."<sup>9</sup> This circular provides guidelines for judges in adjudicating marriage registration applications between individuals of different religions and beliefs, affirms the legal challenges faced by interfaith couples in Indonesia, and confirms the impossibility of interfaith marriages in Indonesia.<sup>10</sup>

The phenomenon of religious conversion is also seen in Kramatjati, East Jakarta, especially among couples who face obstacles in carrying out marriages due to strict religious regulations and administrative complexity implemented by the government. Religious conversion is often chosen as a strategy to overcome various challenges related to religious requirements and state bureaucracy that complicate the legalization of interfaith marriage.<sup>11</sup> In this context, couples often have a dilemma between the desire to get married and the applicable legal constraints. Some couples choose to convert as a practical solution to meet the terms of marriage,<sup>12</sup> even after the marriage, some of them return to their original religion. On the other hand, some decide to continue to embrace new religions, such as Islam. This phenomenon reflects the impact of legal and administrative pressures on personal decisions regarding religion and marriage. It shows the efforts of individuals in overcoming the complexities of the legal system to achieve the desired goal of marriage.

Several interesting findings related to marriage for couples of different religions are as follows. According to Anthin Lathifah

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<sup>9</sup> Cliff Ivan Leonide et al., "SEMA Binding Strength No. 2/2023 Regarding the Judge's Determination in Applications for Registration of Interfaith Marriages," *Awang Long Review Law* 6, no. 2 (2024): 353–58.

<sup>10</sup> Iwan Setiawan et al., "Reforming Marriage Law in Indonesia : A Critical Examination of Islamic Law on the Ban of Interfaith Marriages," *Almanahij* 18, no. 2 (2024): 179–98.

<sup>11</sup> Rosdalina Bukido et al., "Negotiating Love and Faith: Interfaith Marriage in Manado, Indonesia," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 6, no. 1 (2021): 67–76.

<sup>12</sup> Kuswanto, "Prevalence of Interfaith Marriages in Indonesia: An Analysis Based on Principles of International Law and Positive Law," *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 18, no. 1 (2023): 453–64.

(2020),<sup>13</sup> there are variations in the policies of the District Courts in Surakarta, Semarang, and Jepara regarding applications for interfaith marriages, influenced by legal understanding and the role of religious leaders. Rejected couples felt that the decision was unfair, while those who accepted felt their marriage was only recognized as a civil marriage. The findings of Zulfadhli (2021)<sup>14</sup> show that interfaith marriages involving Muslims are not legally recognized because the term civil marriage does not apply in Islam. Ayse Elmali-Karakaya's research (2022)<sup>15</sup> shows that classical Muslim scholars prohibit interfaith marriage without considering the social context, while some contemporary scholars allow Muslim women to marry men of different religions with specific considerations. However, this study did not involve the government in legal regulations. Ayub Mursalin (2023)<sup>16</sup> noted that although the Supreme Court is in line with the Constitutional Court on interfaith marriage, many District Court judges do not refer to the decision. Jefry Tarantang (2023),<sup>17</sup> added that interfaith marriage can be analyzed through the perspective of *'illat* and *maqashid sharia*, with *'illat* showing potential damage to family stability, while *maqashid* assesses its existence and social impact. Previous research has only addressed Muslim scholars' views on interfaith marriage, comparing classical and contemporary perspectives. Support for Muslim women marrying men of different faiths has not involved government regulation, and Supreme Court rulings are often not consulted by judges but do not address what the motives behind the marriage itself are.

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<sup>13</sup> Anthin Lathifah, "State Marriage and Civil Marriage: The Role of State Policy on Interreligious Marriage in Central Java," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial* 15, no. 1 (2020): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v15i1.2689>.

<sup>14</sup> Zulfadhli and Muksalmina Muksalmina, "Legalitas Hukum Perkawinan Beda Agama Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian* 2.6 (2021): 1851-1862.

<sup>15</sup> Ayse Elmali-Karakaya, "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: Classical Islamic Resources and Contemporary Debate on Interfaith Marriage of Muslim Women †," *Religions* 13, no. 8 (2022).

<sup>16</sup> Ayub Mursalin, " Legalitas Perkawinan Beda Agama: Mengungkap Disparitas Putusan Pengadilan di Indonesia," *Undang: Jurnal Hukum* 6, no. 1 (2023): 113–150, <https://doi.org/10.22437/ujh.6.1.113-150> .

<sup>17</sup> Jefry Tarantang, Siah Khosyi'ah, and Usep Saepullah, " Filosofi 'Illat Hukum dan Maqashid Syariah dalam Perkawinan Beda Agama." *Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat* 19.1 (2023): 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v19i1.6318>.

This article analyzes five cases of religious conversion to Islam to gain legal recognition of interfaith marriage in East Jakarta. This study investigates the motivations and factors that encourage individuals or couples to convert as a condition for marriage legality. The main focus of the research is to identify and analyze the social, cultural, and legal aspects that influence conversion decisions, as well as to understand their impact in the context of people's social and legal lives. John William Bennett's theory, which explains how individuals adapt behavior to changing situations, provides an understanding of religious conversion in response to legal requirements. This study applies a legal anthropological approach to understanding the interaction between legal norms and social practices and how individuals navigate the legal system and social norms when choosing conversions. By analyzing cultural and social practices in the conversion process, this study aims to provide in-depth insights into the motivations, challenges and supports experienced by individuals in meeting legal requirements and adjusting to societal norms in East Jakarta.

### **Interfaith Marriage in Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage**

To establish an optimal marriage law, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, established the Committee to Investigate the Rules of Marriage, Talak, and Referral on October 1, 1950.<sup>18</sup> Teuku Mohammad Hasan chairs this committee. Less than a year later, on April 1, 1951, the committee experienced a leadership change, and Mr. Moh. Noer Poerwosoetjpto became the new chairman. This committee submitted two Marriage Bills to the House of Representatives (DPR). *First*, the Bill on the Basic Provisions of Marriage in 1952 is expected to become a general law for all Indonesian people, regardless of religion or ethnicity. *Second*, the Bill on Muslim Marriage Regulations of 1954. Unfortunately, the two bills were not discussed because the political situation in the House of

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<sup>18</sup> Kartika Septiani Amiri, "Perkembangan dan Problematika Hukum Perkawinan di Indonesia," *Al-Mujtabid: Journal of Islamic Family Law* 1, no. 1 (2021): 50. <https://doi.org/10.30984/jifl.v1i1.1639>.

Representatives was still unstable, primarily related to the transition of the government system from parliamentary to presidential in 1959.<sup>19</sup>

In a September 27, 1973, parliamentary session, a group of Muslim students voiced protests. It carried banners containing words such as "The Marriage Bill is a concept" and "The Marriage Bill is immoral."<sup>20</sup> Some demonstrators even approached the pulpit of the DPR leadership and displayed banners with the message, "Secularism and communism are a threat to the Pancasila state." Meanwhile, outside the building, about 400-500 youths from the Attahiriyyah college group, the Indonesia Islamic Student Movement (GMII), and other Islamic organizations participated in a protest with demands that the Marriage Bill be repealed.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, non-Islamic organizations are more likely to push for the marriage law to be passed because it does not have a strong influence on Islamic law.<sup>22</sup>

In the Indonesian context, views on interfaith marriage vary between religions.<sup>23</sup> In Islamic law, there are three main categories of interfaith marriage: 1) between Muslim men and polytheistic women; 2) between Muslim men and women who follow the religion of the Holy Book; and 3) between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, both from other religions and those who follow the Bible. First, marriage between a Muslim and a polytheistic woman, or vice versa, is considered haram by the majority of Islamic scholars, according to QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 221, which prohibits such marriages.<sup>24</sup> Although

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<sup>19</sup> Ahmad Yani and Megawati Barthos, "Transforming Islamic Law in Indonesia from a Legal Political Perspective," *Al-Ahkam* 30, no. 2 (2020): 159–78.

<sup>20</sup> Noryamin Aini, Ariane Utomo, and Peter McDonald, "Interreligious Marriage in Indonesia," *Journal of Religion and Demography* 6, no. 1 (2019): 189–214.

<sup>21</sup> Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Negotiating Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Integration and Conflict in Islamic Law," *Mazhab Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 21, no. 2 (2022): 155–86.

<sup>22</sup> Taufik Hidayat Simatupang, "Adult Age in Marriage in Indonesia (Theoretical Study of the Application of the Lex Posterior Derogat Legi Priori Principle)," *Jurnal Penelitian Hukum De Jure* 21, no. 2 (2021): 213.

<sup>23</sup> Anisah Daeng Tarring, "Perkawinan Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Hukum Positif di Indonesia," *Jurnal Litigasi Amsir* 9, no. 4 (2022): 288–96.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Azmi, Perkasa Alam, and M. Idris, "Review of Positive Law and Fiqh Law on Interfaith Marriages," *QANUN: Journal of Islamic Laws and Studies* 1.1 (2022): 47-52. <https://doi.org/10.58738/qanun.v1i1.42>.

there are differences in interpretation of who is considered a "polytheistic woman," the majority of scholars agree that this prohibition includes all polytheistic women except those who are biblical scholars, such as Jews and Christians.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, marriage between a Muslim and a Kafir woman, or vice versa, is also forbidden based on QS. Al-Mumtahanah (60):10, which prohibits such marriages. Thirdly, the marriage of a Muslim to a woman of Ahl Al-Kitab, or vice versa. In this case, the majority of scholars think that the marriage of a Muslim man to a woman of Ahl Al-Kitab is permissible. In contrast, the marriage of a Muslim woman to a man of Ahl-Al-Kitab is prohibited. This is based on QS. al-Maidah [05]: 5. However, the permissibility of Muslim men marrying Ahl Al-Kitab women is not absolute. The scholars of the Hanafi school, for example, allow the marriage of Muslim men to Ahl al-Kitab women who come from the territory of an Islamic country, but this permissibility is *makruh*. However, if the woman comes from and resides in an enemy country (*Dār al-Harb*), it is forbidden. The Maliki and Shafi'i schools of thought also allow the marriage of a Muslim man to an Ahl al-Kitab woman, whether the woman is from a country under Islamic rule (*Ahl az-Zimmah*) or an enemy country (*Dār al-Harb*). However, the nature of the permissibility of marrying Ahl al-Kitab women is not the same. Some scholars of these two schools of thought allow it, while others disallow it.<sup>26</sup>

### Interfaith Marriage Registration Procedure

Couples with different beliefs can register their marriage through the Population and Civil Registration Institute (Dukcapil).<sup>27</sup> However, according to Masnita, the main requirement is that the

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<sup>25</sup> Linda Hanafiyah, "Marriage Registration Obligation Policy (From Fiqh Munakahat to Marriage Law)," *International Conference on Islamic Studies (ICIS)* (2022): 704–12.

<sup>26</sup> Abdurrahman al-Jazairi, *al-Fiqh ala Mazāhib al-Arba'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2002), 73. See too: Fuad Mustafid, "Perkawinan Beda Agama dan Kebebasan Individual dalam Islam: Perspektif Teori Naskh Mahmoud Muhammad Thaha", *Musawwa*, Vol. X, no. 2 (2011): 234-235.

<sup>27</sup> Disdukcapil Kabupaten Pati, "MK: Pencatatan Nikah Beda Agama di Dukcapil Bukan Pengakuan Negara!," 27 Februari 2023, <https://disdukcapil.patikab.go.id/berita/detail/mk-pencatatan-nikah-beda-agama-di-dukkapil-bukan-pengakuan-negara>.



couple must have the same religious beliefs before civil registration is carried out.<sup>28</sup> If couples, such as Catholics and Protestants, want to maintain their respective beliefs, they must apply to the District Court (PN).<sup>29</sup> Legalizing marriage will depend on the decision of the Supreme Court, which can instruct civil registration without changing religious beliefs.

The Population Administration Law (Adminduk) provides the right to register interfaith marriages as long as permission is obtained from the PN.<sup>30</sup> However, the Constitutional Court (MK) stated that this registration does not mean that the state recognizes the validity of interfaith marriage.<sup>31</sup> Article 34 of Law 23/2006 emphasizes that legal marriage registration is carried out at the civil registry office for non-Muslim couples and at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) for Muslim couples.<sup>32</sup> The Constitutional Court emphasized that although registration includes interfaith marriages, the state does not recognize this type of marriage. The state follows the interpretation of the authorized religious institution, and if there is a discrepancy, the institution is responsible for resolving it.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ambaranie Nadia Kemala Movanita Xena Olivia, "Untuk Daftarkan Nikah Beda Agama ke Dinas Dukcapil, Harus Diputuskan Pengadilan," 30 Juni 2023, <https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2023/06/30/16072041/untuk-daftarkan-nikah-beda-agama-ke-dinas-dukcapi-harus-diputuskan>.

<sup>29</sup> Sri Maryati et al., "The Dynamic Landscape of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Navigating The Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA) No. 02 of 2023 and Population Administration Law," *Daengku: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Innovation* 4, no. 3 (2024): 489–502, <https://doi.org/10.35877/454ri.daengku2613>.

<sup>30</sup> Imam Wahyu Jati, "Pengaturan Perkawinan Beda Agama di Indonesia," *'Aainul Haq: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 2.1 (2022).

<sup>31</sup> Dian Amelia, Nanda Utama, and Fadhillah Zulfa, "Urgensi Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Terhadap Penolakan Perkawinan Beda Agama Melalui Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Nomor 24/PUU-XX/2022," *Unes Law Review* 6.1 (2023): 614–625, <https://doi.org/10.31933/unesrev.v6i1>.

<sup>32</sup> Syamsul Bahri, "Dinamika Hukum Perkawinan Beda Agama dan Campuran di Dunia Islam dan Implementasinya di Indonesia," *Syakhsia: Jurnal Hukum Perdata Islam* 23.1 (2022): 101–114.

<sup>33</sup> Abdul Syatar et al., "Interfaith Marriage Phenomenon in Indonesia from the Perspective of *Sadd al-Zari'ah* and *Fath al-Zari'ah*," *Fitrah: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2023): 19–38, <https://doi.org/10.24952/fitrah.v9i1.6800>.

The Constitutional Court emphasized that registering interfaith marriages in Dukcapil is part of the population administration regulation, which must be done by Article 2 paragraph (1) of Law 1/1974. According to the article, legal marriage must be carried out by the laws of each religion and belief. This decision was not taken unanimously. Some judges, such as Daniel and Suhartoyo, argued that the arrangement of interfaith marriages should be the authority of the House of Representatives, not the Constitutional Court. They emphasized the need for the state to provide fair treatment to various religions in marriage registration to protect the rights of citizens, including interfaith couples and children born from such marriages. The Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration (Ditjen Dukcapil) of the Ministry of Home Affairs follows the Supreme Court's policy, which prohibits the registration of interfaith marriages without the court's approval.<sup>34</sup> Teguh Setyabudi, Director General of Dukcapil, stated that the registration service will continue to follow the applicable rules in response to the Supreme Court regulation prohibiting interfaith marriage registration.<sup>35</sup>

Teguh explained that Article 35 letter a of Law Number 23 of 2006 concerning Population Administration stipulates that marriage registration also applies to marriages that the court has decided. A marriage that receives a court order is between parties of different religions and beliefs. In addition, the court currently does not have the authority to legalize interfaith marriages, according to the Supreme Court Circular Letter Number 2 of 2023.<sup>36</sup> This SEMA was issued to guide judges in adjudicating applications for marriage

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<sup>34</sup> Dany Try Utama Hutabarat, et al., "Pengelabuan Hukum Perkawinan Atas Perkawinan Beda Agama," *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 7.2 (2022): 322-334.

<sup>35</sup> Dispendukcapil, "MA Larang Semua Pengadilan Catatkan Pernikahan Beda Agama," 20 Juli 2023, <https://dispendukcapil.sukoharjokab.go.id/berita/ma-larang-semua-pengadilan-catatkan-pernikahan-beda-agama>.

<sup>36</sup> Vitorio Mantalean and Sabrina Asril, "Dukcapil: Kawin Beda Agama Tak Akan Dicatat Tanpa Penetapan Pengadilan," 20 Juli 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/07/20/16262141/dukcapil-kawin-beda-agama-tak-akan-dicatat-tanpa-penetapan-pengadilan>.

registration between people of different religions and beliefs. Thus, judges must follow the guidelines outlined in SEMA.<sup>37</sup>

The first guideline states that a valid marriage is a marriage that is carried out by the laws of their respective religions and beliefs, as stipulated in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. The second guideline is that the court cannot grant an application for marriage registration between people of different religions and beliefs. This SEMA was signed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Muhammad Syarifuddin. Previously, the Central Jakarta District Court granted the application for interfaith marriage, contrary to the MUI's fatwa on interfaith marriage. The court allowed interfaith marriage between the applicant, JEA, a Christian, and SW, a Muslim woman.

### **The Practice of Converting to Islam in East Jakarta**

Interfaith marriage is often a complex challenge and requires serious consideration from both parties. One of the modes frequently found in the practice of interfaith marriage is the mode of "interfaith marriage."<sup>38</sup> In this mode, two brides-to-be with different religions agree to perform the marriage by following the religious teachings of one of them. For example, if one of the parties is Muslim and the other is non-Muslim, they may choose to follow Islamic teachings or non-Islamic religions during the marriage process. It is important to note that this fashion is not a permanent solution to religious differences in marriage. Although both may agree to follow certain religious teachings during the wedding ceremony, they can return to their respective religious lives once the marriage occurs. This could mean returning to original religious practices or adopting compromises in their daily lives.

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<sup>37</sup> Rizky L Pratama, "Dukcapil Tegaskan Tidak akan Catat Perkawinan Beda Agama Tanpa Penetapan Pengadilan," 20 Juli 2023, <https://www.kompas.tv/nasional/427488/dukcapil-tegaskan-tidak-akan-catat-perkawinan-beda-agama-tanpa-penetapan-pengadilan>.

<sup>38</sup> Asmu'i Syarkowi, "Perkawinan Beda Agama," <https://pa-semarang.go.id/id/home/arsip-artikel/496-perkawinan-beda-agama-mengapa>.

One of the advantages of the "*co-religion*" mode is that it avoids the hassle of marriage registration administration. By following the religious teachings of one of the parties, they can minimize administrative problems related to interfaith marriages. This can include administrative requirements such as marriage registration and other official documents that may involve more complicated procedures if both parties remain faithful to their respective religions.<sup>39</sup> While this mode can help reduce some administrative barriers, remember that interfaith marriage still poses challenges.<sup>40</sup> In the following section, we will discuss in depth how the practice of religious conversion, especially to Islam, is used as a strategy to legalize interfaith marriage in East Jakarta. This explanation will cover the conversion process, the factors that drive it, and the legal and social impacts that the practice entails:

### 1. The Practice of Converting to Islam to Legalize Interfaith Marriage

Marriage between two people of different religions is temporarily prohibited, that is, as long as the two prospective brides continue to embrace their respective faiths. This ban will end if both candidates agree to adhere to one agreed religion.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, couples with different religious backgrounds must adapt to their partner's religion.<sup>42</sup> Based on information from the research informants, the main reason for religious conversion is for the sake of marriage. However, there are specific differences between couples, such as the religion

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<sup>39</sup> Muis Sunarya, "Head of KUA Kramatjati, East Jakarta, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 5, 2024," n.d.

<sup>40</sup> Muis Sunarya, "Head of KUA Kramatjati, East Jakarta, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 5, 2024," n.d.

<sup>41</sup> Muhammad Aminuddin Shofi, "Marriage and Religion: Dynamics of Religious Conversion in Marriage and The Advancement of Community Religious Life Perspective of Religious Psychology and Sociology (Study in Lumajang Regency)," *Dialog* 44, no. 1 (2021): 51–66.

<sup>42</sup> Muhammad Saleh et al., "Interfaith Marriage in the Perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence and Compilation of Islamic Law," *Journal of Family Law and Islamic Court* 1, no. 2 (2022): 1–18.

chosen for the legitimacy of the marriage and the level of commitment to adherence to the new religion during the contract. Here are the specific reasons for each couple to convert:

*First*, the couple Andre (Christian) and Sri Mulyani (Muslim) chose to get married in Islam because the marriage process with the Christian rite was considered too complicated. Andre explained that he had to undergo Christian education for about three months before being declared ready to marry as a Christian. He also said that these requirements often cause emotional and social pressure. By choosing an Islamic marriage, they hope to undergo a more straightforward process and gain the legal legitimacy necessary for their family life. In addition, Andre feels that marriage in the Islamic context also allows them to get support from their family and community more efficiently. He believes that following Islamic traditions will be more accepted by those around them, which is crucial for their psychological well-being. This support is not only in the form of social recognition but also includes practical assistance in preparing for marriage and life afterward. With this support, Andre and Sri Mulyani feel more confident and ready to live a family life together.<sup>43</sup>

*Second*, the same thing was stated by the couple Ardi (Christian) and Salma (Muslim). They chose to marry in Islam for similar reasons, where the Christian marriage process is considered complicated. In addition, Salma's family's request is also an important factor in their decision to marry according to Islamic tradition. Salma's family wants the marriage to be in accordance with their religious teachings, which is expected to strengthen social ties and get the blessing of both parties. Ardi and Salma believe that following this process will bring peace and harmony to their relationship while meeting the family's expectations. They feel that by having an Islamic marriage, they can also more easily integrate into the community, strengthen

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<sup>43</sup> Andre, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 6, 2024," n.d.

family relationships, and create a more supportive environment for their future lives.<sup>44</sup>

*Third*, in Balekambang Village, the couple Aditya (Hindu) and Indah (Islam) explained that the religion used as the basis for marriage is determined based on family agreement. Indah added that in the culture of her environment, the marriage contract is usually carried out at the bride's house. Therefore, it is generally the religion of women that is the basis for the marriage process. This agreement reflects the cultural values and traditions held in their societies, where the role of women in wedding ceremonies is considered very important. Indah also stated that this is not only a matter of religion but also involves broader social and cultural aspects. By choosing to follow the tradition, the couple hopes to avoid conflicts that may arise between their families. In addition, they believe that carrying out marriages according to local norms can strengthen family relationships and gain more significant support from the surrounding community. Family agreements are crucial, as both want to ensure that their marriage is acceptable and respected by all parties involved.<sup>45</sup>

*Fourth*, the same thing was also conveyed by the couple Rasyid (Islam) and Erna (Hindu). They explained that the religion on which marriage is based is determined by family agreement. In addition, in the culture of their environment, the marriage contract is usually carried out at the bride's house, so generally, the woman's religion is the basis for the marriage. Rasyid added that this choice reflects the traditional values embraced by the local community, where the role of women is considered very important in the wedding procession. By following these customs, they hope to gain support from their families and communities and maintain harmony in their

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<sup>44</sup> Salma, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 6, 2024," n.d.

<sup>45</sup> Indah, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 7, 2024," n.d.

relationships. Erna also emphasized that this agreement helps reduce the potential for conflict between the two parties.<sup>46</sup>

*Fifth*, the couple Sugeng (Christian) and Sarah (Islam) legally married in an Islamic way. However, in practice, they hold two contracts by their respective religions. Their families had rejected their marriage due to different religious reasons.<sup>47</sup> Although refused, the woman's parents gave her a condition that the marriage could take place if Sugeng were willing to convert to Islam. Eventually, Sugeng agreed to convert to Islam, and their marriage was allowed.<sup>48</sup> This way, they seek to respect each other's beliefs and gain legitimacy from their religious communities. Sugeng and Sarah believe that implementing these two contracts will strengthen their bonds while accommodating the expectations of the family and the prevailing traditions. This approach reflects their efforts to create harmony in marriage despite coming from different religious backgrounds. Through this process, they hope to set a positive example for other couples in similar situations. Sugeng revealed that despite the challenges in harmonizing the two traditions, open and respectful communication is key to maintaining harmony. Sarah added that the support from her family is also invaluable, so they feel more confident in living a new life as a couple. In this way, Sugeng and Sarah hope their marriage will be legal, spiritually and socially meaningful for themselves and the surrounding environment.

There is no apparent reason for determining which religion to follow when a couple of different faiths get married. According to information from informants, communication between couples and family agreements are interrelated factors. In addition, the community's customary and cultural factors also play an essential role. Understanding and wisdom from

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<sup>46</sup> Erna, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 9, 2024," n.d.

<sup>47</sup> Sofiyatun, "Younger Sibling, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 1, 2024," n.d.

<sup>48</sup> The Victim's Brother-in-law, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 1, 2024," n.d.

both parties in accepting differences of faith, including respecting the decision of one of the brides to change religions, is the main key. Umi Sumbulah explained that religious conversion, from the point of view of religious elites, includes the esoteric dimension of the convert perpetrator and practical-pragmatic motives, such as marriage. He also emphasized that the emergence of anxiety and confusion is normal in the early phases of adjusting to a new rite and culture after conversion.<sup>49</sup>

## **2. Factors that Motivate Them to Return to Their Old Religion**

Regarding the informant's decision to return to their religion of origin after marriage, the researcher can explain as follows: two of the five couples who were informants in this study reflected the fact that before marriage, they had an agreement not to issue religious beliefs after marriage. Rasyid (Islam) and Erna (Hindu) are clear examples of this. They agreed to respect each other's choices after marriage, so despite their differences in beliefs, the two are committed to maintaining the harmony of their relationship. Rasyid chose to return to Islam, which shows that despite religious differences, good communication allows the couple to live together with mutual understanding.<sup>50</sup>

The agreement between Rasyid and Erna highlights the importance of understanding and tolerance in interfaith relationships. In a society often skeptical of interfaith marriages, their open attitude serves as a model for inclusion and diversity. This agreement strengthens their relationship and fosters mutual learning about each other's beliefs, enriching their spiritual and social lives. Their success demonstrates that with open dialogue and mutual respect, interfaith couples can build harmonious households despite differing beliefs,

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<sup>49</sup> Umi Sumbulah, "Konversi dan Kerukunan Umat Beragama : Kajian Makna bagi Pelaku dan Elite Agama-agama di Malang," *Analisis XIII* (2020): 79–110. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v13i1.643>.

<sup>50</sup> Rasyid, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 9, 2024," n.d.



inspiring others in similar situations and promoting broader community tolerance.

The same thing also happened to the couple Aditya (Hindu) and Indah (Islam). Indah did not object to Aditya's decision to return to Hinduism after marriage, suggesting their relationship was based on mutual respect and understanding. This is important in interfaith marriage, where challenges can arise from incompatible beliefs. However, with an open attitude and flexibility, the couple can live a married life without feeling pressured by these differences.<sup>51</sup>

The agreement between Aditya and Indah demonstrates the significance of religious freedom in maintaining a harmonious relationship. Despite potential pressures from family or society, they prioritize love and understanding over religious differences, fostering a supportive environment. Their relationship highlights the importance of communication and mutual respect, offering a model for interfaith couples to navigate challenges. By embracing cultural and spiritual exchange, they enrich their life experiences, setting an example of how interfaith marriages can contribute to broader tolerance and harmony within the community.

On the other hand, the couple Andre (Christian) and Sri Mulyani (Islam) showed slightly different dynamics. In their story, Sri Mulyani revealed that Andre would embrace Islam to marry her. Nonetheless, he had the intention of returning to Christianity after the marriage.<sup>52</sup> It is even more strange that Sri Mulyani, who initially remained firm in her stance on Islam after having her first child, converted to Christianity following her husband. This reflects how love can encourage people to take steps they might not have taken in other situations, but often with temporary intentions. This phenomenon highlights that the decision to change religion is not trivial and usually involves a variety of complex considerations.

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<sup>51</sup> Aditya, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 7, 2024," n.d.

<sup>52</sup> Sri Mulyani, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 6, 2024," n.d.

The dynamic between Andre and Sri Mulyani illustrates the complexities of interfaith relationships, where conversion may symbolize commitment but raises questions about genuine acceptance of new beliefs. Emotional ties and social pressures add layers of difficulty, highlighting the need for transparent communication about expectations. Their story emphasizes that such relationships require more than love; they demand mutual understanding and respect for each other's beliefs. Successful marriages in this context hinge not just on sacrifices but on the sincere integration of shared values and the recognition of individual spiritual journeys.

The story of Ardi (Christian) and Salma (Islam) is more complicated. In this situation, Ardi initially only embraced Islam to marry Salma without a deep commitment to the religious teachings. After marriage, he returned to his native religion and attempted to repeat the Christian wedding procession. This decision shows that deep religious commitments sometimes influence sincerity in living relationships, but Ardi's spiritual journey continues with full dynamics.<sup>53</sup>

This situation illustrates how interfaith marriage can create more complex challenges. While some couples find ways to compromise and appreciate differences, Ardi returns to beliefs that are more familiar to him. This reflects that each individual has a different way and time of living and integrating their beliefs into their daily lives. In this context, both couples must openly discuss their hopes and plans.

Ardi's return to Islam after 13 years of interfaith marriage highlights the profound influence a partner can have on one's spiritual journey. Salma's persistent efforts to guide Ardi towards Islam underscore religious conversion's gradual and often challenging nature. This journey demonstrates that love and support are crucial in bridging belief differences, with Ardi's conversion reflecting a deep internal process rather than a mere formality. Such decisions impact

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<sup>53</sup> Salma, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 6, 2024."

the individual, family dynamics, and broader societal context, symbolizing a shift in values and perspectives.

From the informants' statements, it can be concluded that there is a difference between religion as a firmly held belief system and religion as a value system that regulates social relations in society. Quoting Khairiah, religious attitudes are the conditions of individuals who encourage their behavior to be in harmony with their religious obedience.<sup>54</sup> The process of religious conversion certainly changes the attitudes, mindsets, and beliefs held. Therefore, it is natural for individuals to return to their religion of origin or convert half-heartedly, as seen in some informants. This shows that religious conversions do not always reflect the internal circumstances of the perpetrator as a whole.

The experiences of Rasyid and Erna, along with other couples, reveal the intricate challenges of merging two religious traditions in marriage. Unlike others who intended to return to their original faiths post-marriage, Rasyid and Erna's decision emerged afterward. Erna's deep study of Islam before marriage and eventual return to Hinduism underscores how cultural background and personal convictions shape religious identity. Their story highlights that spiritual journeys are not linear; they involve complex reflections influenced by social, familial, and emotional factors, ultimately reflecting the depth of individual identity and belief.<sup>55</sup>

Sugeng, who also experienced a similar situation, initially lived as a devout Muslim in the first year of his marriage to Sarah. During his stay at Sarah's house, Sugeng received good support for his worship practice. However, after they moved to a new predominantly Christian environment, the influence of that environment began to affect his outlook. Interactions with Christian neighbors and friends led to deep reflection on his beliefs. Eventually, Sugeng returned to his religion of origin,

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<sup>54</sup> Khairiah, "Fenomena Konversi Agama di Kota Pekanbaru (Kajian Tentang Pola dan Makna)." *TOLERANSI: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 10.2 (2019): 151-175. <https://doi.org/10.24014/trs.v10i2.7083>.

<sup>55</sup> Rasyid and Erna, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 9, 2024," n.d.

which shows how crucial social context is in one's spiritual journey. This situation underscores that the decision to change beliefs does not always arise from dissatisfaction with the religion they are living in but can be influenced by external factors.<sup>56</sup>

The stories of Rasyid and Erna and Sugeng and Sarah highlight the complexity of interfaith relationships. In the context of marriage, dilemmas often arise related to each other's identities and beliefs. While there are efforts to understand and respect each other's beliefs, cultural roots, and traditions are usually challenging. This shows the importance of open communication in relationships, where partners can discuss their beliefs without feeling pressured to change religions. This experience reminds us that the spiritual journey is a dynamic process and that every individual has the right to explore their beliefs without feeling bound to follow a partner's beliefs.

Based on information from sources, the decision to return to the religion of origin results from the interaction between two sensitive things faced by individuals who undergo conversion. One of the main factors is the prohibition that applies to interfaith marriage. This prohibition is listed in Article 2 of Law No. 16 of 2019, which replaces Law No. 01 of 1974 concerning Marriage.<sup>57</sup> This provision shows that interfaith marriage is not legally allowed, creating clear boundaries for couples with different religious backgrounds.<sup>58</sup> As a result, many individuals feel pressured to choose between maintaining their beliefs or changing their beliefs for the sake

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<sup>56</sup> Sugeng and Sarah, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 7, 2024," n.d.

<sup>57</sup> Achmad Moelyono, Riza Yudha Patria, and Fitri Setiyani Dwiarti, "Marriage Dispensation Policy In Children Protection: Evaluation Of Article 7 Paragraph (2) Of Law Number 16 Of 2019 Concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 Concerning Marriage)," *Al-Mashlahah: Jurnal Hukum Islam Dan Pranata Sosial Islam* 10, no. 01 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.30868/am.v10i01.2255>.

<sup>58</sup> Meliyani Sidiqah, "Legal Vacuum in Interfaith Marriage Rules in Indonesia," *Iblam Law Review* 3, no. 1 (2023): 99–110.

of marriage.<sup>59</sup> This creates complex and dilemmatic conditions for those seeking to live with couples of different religions.

Furthermore, the rules in the Compilation of Islamic Law reinforce this situation, particularly in article 40, paragraph (c), which states, "It is forbidden to enter into marriage between a man and a woman due to certain circumstances: c. A woman who is not a Muslim." This shows that the law also provides strict limits when it comes to interreligious relations.<sup>60</sup> In addition, article 44 underlines that "A Muslim woman is forbidden to marry a man who is not a Muslim."<sup>61</sup> These provisions show that the law generally regulates marriage and explicitly recognizes differences in beliefs as grounds for preventing marriage.<sup>62</sup> This further underscores the challenges faced by interfaith couples, as they must consider the legal implications of their decisions.<sup>63</sup>

In the end, article 61 of the Compilation of Islamic Law emphasizes that "Incompatibility (non-*kufu'*) cannot be used as an excuse to prevent marriage unless it is incompatibility due to religious differences or *ikhtilafu al dien*."<sup>64</sup> This provision adds a layer of complexity to the dilemma faced by couples of

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<sup>59</sup> Nofrizal Nofrizal et al., "Implications of Supreme Court Jurisprudence No.1400k/Pdt/1986 on Marriage Different Religions," *Unram Law Review* 6, no. 1 (2022).

<sup>60</sup> Rizqon, "Analisis Perkawinan Beda Agama Perspektif KHI, HAM dan CLD-KHI," *AL-MANHAJ: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial Islam* 4.1 (2022): 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.37680/almanhaj.v4i1.1499>.

<sup>61</sup> Aldi Subhan Lubis and Zaini Muhawir, "The Dynamics of Interreligious Marriage in Indonesian Religious and Legal Perspectives," *ARRUS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2023): 43–51.

<sup>62</sup> Rezki Maidasmi and Saiful Amin, "The Phenomena of Different Religion Marriage Among Artists; Perspective Texture of Verses Ahkam ( Muhammad Ali Ash-Shabuni)," *GIC Proceeding* 1 (2023): 425–35.

<sup>63</sup> Andra Noormansyah and Umar Haris Sanjaya, "The Legal Vacuum Of Interreligious Marriage In Indonesia: The Study Of Judges' Consideration In Interreligious Marriage Court Decisions 2010 -2021," *Prophetic Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2022): 177–94.

<sup>64</sup> Muhammadong, "Analysis of The Compilation Review of Islamic Law on Interfaith Marriages From A Sharia Perspective," *International Journal of Law and Society* 1, no. 2 (2024): 15–24, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62951/ijls.v1i2.18>.

different religions. For many individuals, returning to their religion of origin is not just a spiritual choice but also closely linked to existing social and legal norms. With these prohibitions in place, couples have to face a difficult choice: keep their beliefs or give them up to get married. This situation reflects the battle between love, faith, and adherence to existing legal norms, which often puts couples in a dilemma.

The controversy regarding interfaith marriage in the Marriage Law (UUP) cannot be separated from its historical context. The process of drafting and formulating the UUP resulted from complex bargaining between the various factions. As a result, many people's aspirations related to interfaith marriage do not receive an adequate response from lawmakers. Despite efforts to minimize conflict by implementing a limited system of unification, which includes provisions for marriage, the provision of space for specificity allowed by each religion still faces challenges in practice.<sup>65</sup>

In its implementation, the issue of interfaith marriage is still sensitive in Indonesia. While some couples choose to have their marriages abroad, which gives them more freedom regarding religion, they are still exposed to the laws that apply at home when they return.<sup>66</sup> Registering marriages abroad is acceptable in Indonesia, but this does not necessarily eliminate the controversy arising from differences in legal interpretation among various society groups. This condition shows a misalignment between the applicable marriage law and the community's real needs.<sup>67</sup> People who want to marry different religions often feel hampered by existing provisions, which do

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<sup>65</sup> Ahmad Fernanda, Zainal Azwar, and Dailani Ismail, "Criticizing the Verdict of 916/Pdt.P/2022/PN. Sby Surabaya District Court Against Interfaith Marriage from the Perspective of Marriage Law in Indonesia," *Al-Qadha: Jurnal Hukum Islam Dan Perundang-Undangan* 10, no. 2 (2023): 126–46.

<sup>66</sup> Najichah, "Reconstruction of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia Through Constitutional Court Decisions," *Walisongo Law Review (Walrev)* 4, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>67</sup> Muhammad Aprizal Arsyita et al., "Smuggling of the Law in Different Religious Marriage As a Legal Action in the State of Pancasila," *SMART: Journal of Sharia, Traditon, and Modernity* 1, no. 1 (2021): 16.

not reflect the diversity of beliefs held by citizens. Therefore, it is essential to explore the possibility of more inclusive legal reforms to address the challenges and social dynamics that continue to develop in the context of interfaith marriage in Indonesia.<sup>68</sup>

All the informants stated that their actions to change religions before and after marriage often caused tension in the family. This tension means that family members resist the decision to convert. The emergence of this kind of conflict is understandable because feelings related to religion usually contain significant potential disputes.

**Table 1**  
**Arguments of Informants Returning to the Religion of Origin**

	<b>Interfaith Marriage Couples</b>	<b>Religion in Marriage</b>	<b>Religion After Marriage</b>
1	Andre (Christian) and Sri Mulyani (Muslim)	Islam	Andre returned to Christianity, and Sri Mulyani followed her husband's religion
2	Ardi (Christian) and Salma (Muslim)	Islam	Ardi is a Muslim following the religion of his wife
3	Aditya (Hindu) and Indah (Muslim)	Islam	Aditya returns to Hinduism, and Indah remains Muslim
4	Rasyid (Muslim) and Erna (Hindu)	Islam	Rasyid remained Muslim, and Erna reverted to her original religion.
5	Sugeng (Christian) and Sarah (Muslim)	Islam	Sugeng Returns to Christianity, and Sarah Remains Muslim

<sup>68</sup> Rosdiana Rosdiana and Ahmad Bahtiar, “Preferences of Children’s Religious Interfaith Marriages: Case Study in The International Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP),” *Justicia Islamica* 17, no. 2 (2020): 207–22.

Choosing to change religions before marriage is a challenging process, marked by profound emotional and ethical dilemmas. Individuals often struggle between maintaining their long-standing beliefs and fulfilling the expectations of a partner with a different religious background. This decision is shaped by emotional factors, societal influences, and familial pressures, affecting personal relationships and broader social dynamics. After marriage, many converts experience unease and a sense of lost identity, feeling conflicted between their adopted faith and the familiarity of their original beliefs. This situation underscores the complex interplay between religious conversion and the broader context of interpersonal, social, and cultural dynamics.

### **3. Implications of Religious Conversion on Law and Social Dynamics**

The decision of the informants to return to their original religion after marriage can be grouped into two main factors:

#### **a. The Belief Factor**

The belief factor has a significant role in an individual's decision to return to their original religion after conversion. Many converts feel uncertainty and indecision when practicing a new religion, especially when faced with differences in values and teachings that contradict their previous beliefs. The sense of attachment to the original teachings often resurfaces, creating a complex dilemma between maintaining and adjusting to new beliefs. This shows that the conversion process is an action and a profound emotional and spiritual journey. The discomfort in practicing new teaching can make individuals long for the stability and familiarity of the religion they have left behind.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Nurfadilah Tarni, Widyastuti, and Haerani Nur, "Pengalaman Konversi Agama Pada Remaja Mualaf." *PESHUM: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora* 2.1 (2022): 41-49. <https://doi.org/10.56799/peshum.v2i1.971>.



Religious motivation is also a key element in this process of spiritual conversion.<sup>70</sup> The hope of God's presence in daily life is a significant motivation for many individuals. They seek a profound spiritual experience, which can often be found in their long-held religious practices. In addition, enjoying religious knowledge and carrying out religious practices in a known way provides a more profound sense of satisfaction and meaning.<sup>71</sup> In this context, religion is not only considered a set of rules but a source of peace, happiness, and solutions to various life problems. This desire to return to the source of joy is a strong reason for individuals to return to existing beliefs.

Finally, the motivation to get rewards, avoid punishment, and achieve peace in daily life also contributed to the decision to return to the original religion. Belief in the spiritual consequences of an individual's actions is often a significant motivator. Many converts feel that by returning to their previous teachings, they can live more in harmony with the values they believe in.<sup>72</sup> The search for peace and ways to overcome problems is also a factor that cannot be ignored in this context. These motivational elements are intertwined and create a complex intertwining that encourages individuals to return to their spiritual roots. This process confirms that religious conversion is a highly personal journey influenced by various spiritual and emotional considerations.

Salma explained that her husband, Ardi, had difficulty letting go of his old beliefs. Even though he had embraced Islam after marriage, Ardi still carried out the

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<sup>70</sup> Ade Suherman and Prima Melati, "Juridical Review of the Decision of Bandung District Court No . 166 / Pdt / G / 1991 / PN . BDG After the Amendment of Law No . 7 of 1989," *Journal Civic and Social Studies* 7, no. 1 (2023): 49–55, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31980/civicos.v7i1.2699>.

<sup>71</sup> Anggy Wirnasary, "Penerimaan terhadap Anggota Keluarga yang Pindah Agama." *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAl)* 2.3 (2021): 157-165.

<sup>72</sup> Karunia Haganta, et al. , "Manusia, terlalu (Banyak) Manusia: Kontroversi Childfree di Tengah Alasan Agama, Sains, dan Krisis Ekologi," *Prosiding Konferensi Integrasi Interkoneksi Islam dan Sains* 4 (2022): 309–20.

practice of Christian worship, which has become part of his life.<sup>73</sup> This reflects a strong emotional attachment to his religion of origin. A similar experience was experienced by Sugeng, who felt it was difficult to leave the Christianity he had adhered to since childhood.<sup>74</sup> This uncertainty points to the challenges individuals often face when converting, especially when there is a deep emotional attachment. Despite the encouragement from the couple, such as from Salma to Ardi, the decision to hold on to old beliefs was not easy. It underscores the complexities that often arise in the conversion process, where individuals must consider between maintaining the original beliefs or adjusting to the new beliefs encountered in the context of married life.

The strength of a person's belief in religion is closely related to the meaning they follow. In her research, Khairiah explained that religious conversion is not only about switching from one religion to another but also includes profound emotional and spiritual experiences. Individuals often seek peace of mind and reassurance in their spiritual journey, which is sometimes difficult to achieve in a new faith.<sup>75</sup> This process suggests that conversion is a complex journey in which individuals seek a more meaningful religious identity. Returning to the religion of origin often reflects the need for stability and comfort, especially in times of crisis. In many cases, these decisions are influenced by external factors and deeply personal feelings, which are essential in determining their spiritual path forward.

## **b. Family and Couple Factors**

Rasyid's decision to return to his religion of origin, as well as Erna, was influenced by the fact that their beliefs

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<sup>73</sup> Salma, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 6, 2024."

<sup>74</sup> Sugeng, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, July 7, 2024."

<sup>75</sup> Khairiah, " Fenomena Konversi Agama di Kota Pekanbaru (Kajian Tentang Pola Dan Makna)."

were still strong, and there was agreement and leniency from their spouse and family to adhere to their respective religions after marriage. The flexibility provided by couples and families makes the religious conversion process smoother and less conflict. As a result, the problems that arise are limited to gossip and negative stigma from a handful of family members who disagree with their decisions. This reflects the importance of social support in undergoing spiritual change, where open communication and tolerance are key in maintaining the harmony of relationships. Families that understand and accept religious differences can create a more conducive environment for individuals to live their spiritual journey without feeling depressed. Thus, both Rasyid and Erna can live their faith more calmly, focusing on self-development and the search for deeper meaning in life without the burden of external judgments that may arise from society.<sup>76</sup>

The green light from couples and families is a strong reason for perpetrators to convert to religion steadily. This can be understood because humans, as creatures with personalities, have dispositions and characters. Character is a fixed and unchanging element, while character is a psychological aspect that can change, formed through external influences in the form of assimilation and socialization. The sense of comfort and security when returning to the original religion in the context of this research is similar to Noor's findings about converts who have a positive bond with their families. In such cases, despite their different religions, they are still loved and appreciated for the decisions taken. In contrast, converts who do not receive support and recognition for their choices tend to experience negative bonds with family, even feeling more emotionally connected to others. This shows the importance of social support in the process of religious conversion, which significantly influences the

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<sup>76</sup> Rasyid, "Perpetrators of Interfaith Marriage, Interview, Kramatjati District, July 9, 2024."

experiences and feelings of individuals in their spiritual journey.<sup>77</sup>

**Table 2**  
**Arguments of Informants Returning to the Religion of Origin**

	<b>Interfaith Marriage Couples</b>	<b>Arguments Returning to the Origin Religion</b>
1	Andre (Christian) and Sri Mulyani (Muslim)	The belief in the religion of origin is still strong, and the influence of the spouse and even Sri Mulyani follows her husband's religion
2	Ardi (Christian) and Salma (Muslim)	Belief in the religion of origin is still strong and the influence of the spouse.
3	Aditya (Hindu) and Indah (Muslim)	Belief in the religion of origin is still strong
4	Rasyid (Muslim) and Erna (Hindu)	Belief in the religion of origin is still strong
5	Sugeng (Christian) and Sarah (Muslim)	Belief in the religion of origin is still strong

The table reveals that informants' return to their original religions is driven by their deep-rooted beliefs despite interfaith marriages. For instance, Andre and Ardi felt positive support from their partners, but this did not alter their fundamental religious convictions. Similarly, Aditya, Rasyid, and Sugeng emphasized the enduring strength of their commitment to their faiths. This underscores that comfort and security in one's long-held beliefs are crucial, even amid religious differences in relationships. Additionally, the trend of Muslim women converting to Christianity to align with their Christian husbands illustrates how emotional bonds and family dynamics influence such decisions. The desire to maintain marital unity and familial

<sup>77</sup> Arafat Noer Abdillah, "Pemberdayaan Mualaf Pasca Konversi di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna* 11, no. 1 (2020): 23–30.

harmony often outweighs religious changes, reflecting the profound impact of personal relationships on religious identity and conversion.

It is important to note that these decisions are not always straightforward and involve deep consideration. Some women may feel that they are too emotionally intense to part ways with their partner, especially if they have built a family and have children. Responsibility for children is often a significant factor that encourages women to stay with their husbands, although religious differences have been a challenge.<sup>78</sup>

When a husband returns to Christianity, the woman may feel that embracing her husband's religion is a form of sacrifice and commitment to the family. While tensions and challenges may arise from differences in beliefs, the desire to keep the family together is often a top priority. However, following your husband's religion can also create internal and external conflicts, especially in daily religious practices. Like Sri Mulyani, after the family found out that she had converted to Christianity following her husband's first religion, the family did not recognize her as part of her family.<sup>79</sup> Women who experience these changes may face pressure from social and family settings that still maintain their original religious beliefs.<sup>80</sup>

Overall, the phenomenon in which Muslim women follow the religion of their husbands who return to Christianity is the result of complex dynamics in marriage and family relationships. Emotional factors, family responsibilities, and commitment to family integrity influence this decision. While it may detail the woman's personal journey, it is still important to respect and

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<sup>78</sup> Muis Sunarya, "Head of KUA Kramatjati, East Jakarta, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 5, 2024."

<sup>79</sup> Sofiyatun, "Younger Sibling, *Wawancara*, Kecamatan Kramatjati, 1 Februari 2024."

<sup>80</sup> Muis Sunarya, "Head of KUA Kramatjati, East Jakarta, *Interview*, Kramatjati District, February 5, 2024."

understand the religious decisions made in the context of her personal and family life.

## Conclusion

This article contributes to understanding the dynamics of religious conversion in order to qualify for marriage. The mode of converting to Islam for the legality of interfaith marriage often presents complicated dynamics in women's lives in Indonesia. This phenomenon can occur in couples, both men and women who pretend to convert to Islam in order to be eligible to marry their spouse. After marriage, one of the couples often changes their lifestyle and abandons Islamic practices. One of the couples, who often feels resigned and limited in their choices, sometimes decides to follow their husband's religion for the sake of domestic harmony and the continuity of family relationships. The discovery of individuals who convert and then return to their religion shows that such conversions are often only a mode of marriage for couples. This indicates that their goals do not always reflect a sincere intention to convert. Based on the typology of religious conversion actors proposed by John William Bennet, those who have a desire to return to their original religion after marriage are included in the category of adaptive *behavior*, which is actions taken to achieve certain goals. In this context, conversion is considered a pragmatic step to gain approval in a relationship, without a deep commitment to the teachings of the new religion.

There are two main reasons why couples of different religions choose to return to their original religion. *First*, the strength of the faith of the five informants in their old religion shows that the belief is private. In this context, individuals with strong faith will find it difficult to feel comfortable to completely change their religion when facing marriage. It can be seen that of the five couples, all couples returned to their home religion because of their strong belief in the religious teachings they had previously adhered to. *Second*, the freedom to religion provided by spouses and families serves as a very important social support. A supportive social environment allows converters to feel calm and confident in their decisions. This support helps them feel loved and valued in society, which is essential for maintaining emotional and spiritual health. With this kind of support, the conversion process becomes lighter and more understanding,

reducing the potential for conflict and creating a harmonious atmosphere, despite differences in religious beliefs. Support from spouses and family contributes greatly to the spirituality of the individual.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with any party in writing this article.

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