

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

**Lina Nur Anisa**

Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Ngawi, Jawa Timur

[linanuranisa85@gmail.com](mailto:linanuranisa85@gmail.com)

*\*Corresponding author*

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**Abstract:** This article explores interfaith marriage through theological, psychological, and sociological perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding. Using a qualitative approach with literature analysis, it reviews various studies and documents on interfaith marriage. The theological perspective discusses religious traditions' views and the importance of doctrinal compatibility for marital stability. The psychological perspective examines emotional challenges, conflicts related to religious practices and child-rearing, and the importance of emotional support and coping skills. The sociological perspective analyzes the impact on social structures, including increased interreligious dialogue and resistance from conservative communities. Findings show that interfaith marriages can promote tolerance and understanding among different religious groups but also face significant emotional and social challenges. The research offers practical insights for policymakers to create supportive legal and social frameworks and helps couples understand and manage religious differences. The article emphasizes good communication and mutual understanding for achieving harmonious relationships in interfaith marriages.

**Keywords:** *Interfaith Marriage, Multidisciplinary Perspective*

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengeksplorasi pernikahan beda agama melalui perspektif teologi, psikologi, dan sosiologi untuk memberikan pemahaman yang komprehensif. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis literatur, artikel ini meninjau berbagai studi dan dokumen tentang pernikahan beda agama. Perspektif teologis membahas pandangan tradisi keagamaan dan pentingnya kompatibilitas doktrinal untuk stabilitas pernikahan. Perspektif psikologis meneliti tantangan emosional, konflik terkait praktik keagamaan dan pengasuhan anak, serta pentingnya dukungan emosional dan keterampilan mengatasi masalah. Perspektif sosiologis menganalisis dampak pada struktur sosial, termasuk peningkatan dialog antaragama dan resistensi dari komunitas konservatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pernikahan beda agama dapat mendorong toleransi dan pemahaman antar kelompok agama, tetapi juga menghadapi tantangan emosional dan sosial yang signifikan. Penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi pembuat kebijakan untuk menciptakan kerangka hukum dan sosial yang mendukung dan membantu pasangan memahami serta mengelola perbedaan agama. Artikel ini menekankan komunikasi yang baik dan saling pengertian untuk mencapai hubungan yang harmonis dalam pernikahan beda agama.

# UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

**Kata Kunci:** *Pernikahan Beda Agama, Perspektif Multidisipliner*

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage aims to form a family filled with tranquility, love, and mercy. To achieve this goal, Islam offers balance between partners, which includes equality in social strata as well as beliefs. Islam does not overly concern itself with differences in social strata, such as in mixed marriages between Indonesian citizens and foreign nationals. However, it is different with interfaith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims, where Islam has clearly established rules.<sup>1</sup>

Interfaith marriage, the union between individuals from different religious backgrounds, is a phenomenon that has been increasingly observed both in Indonesia and globally. This trend is reflective of broader societal changes such as globalization, increased mobility, and greater cultural exchanges.<sup>2</sup> In Indonesia, a country renowned for its religious diversity, interfaith marriages present unique challenges and opportunities. These marriages often require couples to navigate complex religious, legal, and societal landscapes, which can impact their relationships and family dynamics.<sup>3</sup>

For example, research by Crouch highlights the complexities of legal pluralism in Indonesia and its impact on interfaith marriages. He notes that the Indonesian Marriage Law, which requires marriages to be conducted according to the religious laws of the parties involved, often creates significant obstacles for interfaith couples.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Mulia discusses how interfaith couples in Indonesia must often contend with societal pressures and potential stigma, further complicating their marital and family dynamics.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, Bowen explains that despite legal hurdles, some interfaith couples have found ways to legalize their marriages, either by marrying abroad or seeking legal assistance from advocacy groups like the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace. This organization has helped many couples navigate the bureaucratic and legal challenges associated with interfaith marriage.<sup>6</sup> These examples illustrate the broader societal and legal contexts within which interfaith marriages occur in Indonesia.

Globally, interfaith marriages are influenced by migration, education, and secular values. Kalmijn's study indicates rising interfaith marriages signal greater social integration and acceptance of religious diversity. However, it also highlights potential

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<sup>1</sup> Yamani Naufal et al., "Perkawinan Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam dan Hukum Positif di Indonesia," *Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research*, 2 No. 4 (April 2024), 97-105, <https://journal.banjaresepacific.com/index.php/jimr/article/download/409/374>

<sup>2</sup> H. Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 45.

<sup>3</sup> D. Jones, *Interfaith Families: Personal Stories of Jewish-Christian Intermarriage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 67.

<sup>4</sup> M. Crouch, *Law and Religion in Indonesia: Conflict and the Courts in West Java* (London: Routledge, 2010), 60.

<sup>5</sup> S. Mulia, *Interfaith Marriage and Legal Challenges in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2016), 35.

<sup>6</sup> J. R. Bowen, *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 112.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

conflicts and challenges from religious differences affecting marital stability and satisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

Several previous studies examining interfaith marriage include: *first*, the article written by Yamani Naufal et al. titled "Perkawinan Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam dan Hukum Positif di Indonesia." This article discusses how interfaith marriage is viewed from the perspective of Islamic law and the positive law in Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> *Second*, "Nikah Beda Agama di Indonesia: Studi Komparasi Hukum Islam dan Hukum Nasional" written by Amiruddin, discusses the comparison between Islamic law and national law regarding interfaith marriage in Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> *Third*, "Analisis Hukum Islam terhadap Penetapan Hukum Hakim tentang Perkawinan Beda Agama di Indonesia dalam putusan Nomor: 12/Pdt.P/2022/PN. Ptk" by Fauzah Nur Aksa et al. This article provides an in-depth analysis of how Islamic law is applied in cases of interfaith marriage in Indonesia, particularly through the ruling No. 12/Pdt.P/2022/PN. Ptk, and offers insights and recommendations for future improvements.<sup>10</sup> *Fourth*, "Pernikahan Beda Agama Menurut Hukum Islam dan Hukum Positif" written by Muhammad Rafa et al., discusses how interfaith marriage is regulated and understood from the perspective of Islamic law and positive law in Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the growing occurrence of interfaith marriages, academic literature lacks an integrated perspective from theology, psychology, and sociology. Studies often focus on one dimension, neglecting their multifaceted nature. This article aims to bridge this gap by providing a holistic analysis of religious, psychological, and social factors in interfaith marriages.

Research questions of this article are: *first*, what is the theological perspective on interfaith marriage? *Second*, what is the psychological perspective on interfaith marriage? *Third*, what is the sociological perspective on interfaith marriage? Based on these research questions, the purpose of this article is: *first*, to explore interfaith marriage through a theological perspective. *Second*, to explore interfaith marriage through a psychological perspective. *Third*, to explore interfaith marriage through a sociological perspective.

This article is significant in providing new and practical insights for interfaith couples, religious communities, counselors, and policymakers. With a multidisciplinary

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<sup>7</sup> M. Kalmijn, "Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 No. 1 (1998), 395-421, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>

<sup>8</sup> Naufal et al., "Perkawinan Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam dan Hukum Positif di Indonesia," 97-105.

<sup>9</sup> Amiruddin, "Nikah Beda Agama di Indonesia: Studi Komparasi Hukum Islam dan Hukum Nasional," *Jurnal Tahqiq*, 18, No. 1, (2024), 29-43. <https://jurnal.stisalhilalsigli.ac.id/index.php/tahqiq/article/download/207/156>

<sup>10</sup> Fauzah Nur Aksa et al., "Analisis Hukum Islam terhadap Penetapan Hukum Hakim tentang Perkawinan Beda Agama di Indonesia dalam putusan Nomor: 12/Pdt.P/2022/PN. Ptk," *Palita: Journal of Sosial Religion Research*, 9 No. 1 (2024), 13-34, <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v9i1.4927>

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Rafa et al., "Pernikahan Beda Agama Menurut Hukum Islam dan Hukum Positif," *Kitabah: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Humaniora*, 2 No. 1 (2024), 24-38, <https://ejurnalilmiah.com/index.php/kitabah/article/view/11417>

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

approach, this article helps in understanding and managing religious differences, relationship stress, and promoting social cohesion and reducing prejudice, thereby supporting more inclusive and harmonious communities.

### METHOD

The research approach used is qualitative, with a library research method involving the study or review of books and literature related to the topic discussed.<sup>12</sup> This article begins by conducting extensive library research to gather relevant literature from various academic sources. This research includes studies from theological, psychological, and sociological perspectives on interfaith marriage.<sup>13</sup> This literature review aims to identify gaps in existing research and understand how each discipline approaches this topic.<sup>14</sup> Books, journal articles, and research reports discussing doctrinal compatibility, relationship dynamics, as well as demographic trends and social implications will be analyzed.<sup>15</sup>

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation.<sup>16</sup> Data is collected from various documents, books, journal articles, and other sources relevant to interfaith marriage. The researchers compile and organize this data for further analysis.

The data analysis techniques applied are content analysis, induction, and deduction.<sup>17</sup> The researchers conduct content analysis on the collected literature to identify main themes, patterns, and relationships relevant to interfaith marriage.<sup>18</sup> They use induction to develop theories and findings based on the collected data. This technique allows researchers to identify new patterns and gain deep insights from the existing data.<sup>19</sup> The researchers also use deduction to test hypotheses and existing theories based on the analyzed data. This approach helps in confirming or refuting findings from previous literature.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> L. J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018), 27.

<sup>13</sup> J. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 102.

<sup>14</sup> D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 55.

<sup>15</sup> R. K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 78.

<sup>16</sup> G. A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9 No. 2 (2009), 27-40, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.3316/QRJ0902027/full/html>

<sup>17</sup> K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 120.

<sup>18</sup> P. Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution* (Klagenfurt: Beltz, 2014), 67.

<sup>19</sup> D. R. Thomas, "A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data," *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27 No. 2 (2006), 237-246, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098214005283748>

<sup>20</sup> S. Elo & H. Kyngäs, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62 No. 1 (2008), 107-115, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

The article's comparative approach is used to compare findings from theological, psychological, and sociological perspectives.<sup>21</sup> The authors explore how each discipline views interfaith marriage, identifying similarities and differences in their findings. This approach helps to understand how religious, psychological, and social factors interact in the context of interfaith marriage.

The findings from these three perspectives are then integrated to form a holistic analysis. This article shows how religious, psychological, and social factors influence and shape the dynamics of interfaith marriage. By combining these three perspectives, the article strives to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of interfaith marriage.<sup>22</sup>

### DISCUSSION

#### Theological Perspective

##### *Definition of Theology in Marriage*

Theology, broadly defined, is the study of the nature of the divine, religious beliefs, and the practice of faith.<sup>23</sup> When applied to marriage, theology explores the sacred dimensions of the marital union, emphasizing its spiritual significance and divine purpose.<sup>24</sup> In many religious traditions, marriage is viewed not merely as a social contract but as a covenantal relationship ordained by God.<sup>25</sup> This theological perspective is crucial in understanding how different religions conceptualize and value the institution of marriage.<sup>26</sup>

In Christianity, marriage is a sacrament reflecting the union between Christ and the Church. The Apostle Paul emphasizes its sacredness and mutual respect (Ephesians 5:25-33). Timothy Keller's "The Meaning of Marriage" highlights marriage as a commitment mirroring God's selfless love and faithfulness.<sup>27</sup>

Islam also places significant emphasis on marriage, viewing it as a contract (*'aqd*) that is both a social agreement and a divine command. The Qur'an describes marriage as a means to tranquility, love, and mercy (Qur'an 30:21), highlighting its role in promoting moral and social order. Marriage in Islam is a religious duty that contributes to the

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<sup>21</sup> C. C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 111.

<sup>22</sup> U. Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 137.

<sup>23</sup> A. E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 14.

<sup>24</sup> J. Witte & M. S. Ellison, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 22.

<sup>25</sup> R. S. Anderson, *Theology of Marriage and Family: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 45.

<sup>26</sup> D. L. Carmody, *Ways to the Center: An Introduction to World Religions* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2010), 78.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 45.



## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

stability and continuity of the family unit, which is considered the cornerstone of Islamic society.<sup>28</sup>

In Hinduism, marriage is considered one of the essential *samskaras* (sacraments) and a vital stage in an individual's *dharma* (duty). The sacred texts like the *Manusmriti* and the *Rigveda* emphasize the importance of marriage for fulfilling spiritual and societal duties. The Hindu marriage ceremony involves various rituals that signify the joining of two souls and the integration of their families and spiritual journeys.<sup>29</sup>

The theological view of marriage across different religions underscores its significance as a divine institution that fosters not only personal relationships but also communal harmony and spiritual growth. By understanding these theological foundations, one can appreciate the profound spiritual dimensions that underpin the institution of marriage, transcending its social and legal aspects.

### *Views of Major Religions*

Islamic teachings on interfaith marriage derive from the Quran and Hadith, providing clear guidelines on permissible unions between Muslims and non-Muslims. According to the Quran, Muslim men are allowed to marry women from "People of the Book" (i.e., Jews and Christians), as stated in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:5): "This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you".<sup>30</sup>

Muslim women are generally not permitted to marry non-Muslim men to preserve Islamic faith within the family, as husbands influence children's religious upbringing. Esposito notes this rule maintains Islamic principles.<sup>31</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasizes that while Islam allows interfaith marriages under specific conditions, it is ideal for both partners to share the same faith to avoid potential conflicts and ensure a harmonious family life. Al-Qaradawi argues that mutual respect and understanding are crucial in interfaith marriages to foster a stable family environment.<sup>32</sup>

Christian perspectives on interfaith marriage differ between Protestant and Catholic traditions. The Catholic Church views marriage as a sacrament, requiring a dispensation for mixed marriages, with commitments to preserving faith and raising children Catholic.<sup>33</sup> The Catholic Church is cautious about interfaith marriages due to potential religious conflicts and challenges in maintaining a unified spiritual life, though it acknowledges the validity of such marriages grounded in mutual respect.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Abdul-Rahman Doi, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1984), 110.

<sup>29</sup> Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 207.

<sup>30</sup> Ali, Ahma Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 1987), 262.

<sup>31</sup> Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (4th ed.), 93.

<sup>32</sup> Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 2001), 147.

<sup>33</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1635-1637.

<sup>34</sup> D. Doyle, *The Catholic Church and Marriage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 212.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Protestant views on interfaith marriage vary widely. Anglican and Lutheran churches are more accepting, emphasizing love and respect, while evangelical and conservative groups caution against it, citing "unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Both Catholic and Protestant traditions stress open communication and shared values for success.<sup>35</sup>

Hinduism offers diverse perspectives on interfaith marriage. Traditionally, Hindu marriages are sacramental, integrating two families spiritually and socially. Scriptures like the Manusmriti prescribe endogamy for social order and religious purity. Modern views, especially in urban areas, accept interfaith marriages with mutual respect. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 allows interfaith marriages under certain conditions.<sup>36</sup>

Swami Vivekananda advocated for interfaith marriages, emphasizing love and harmony across religions. He believed all religions share the same essence, promoting understanding and respect. Despite modern views, challenges persist in Hindu communities, especially rural areas, where families pressure individuals to marry within their community.<sup>37</sup>

Buddhism's inclusive approach to interfaith marriage lacks strict rules, focusing on compassion, understanding, and alleviating suffering. Ethical and moral qualities are prioritized over religious backgrounds. Peter Harvey notes the importance of a virtuous life. The Dalai Lama emphasizes religious harmony, love, and respect to overcome differences and foster a harmonious family life.<sup>38</sup>

In conclusion, interfaith marriages have significant theological and social implications across various religious traditions. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism each have unique perspectives, focusing on fundamental religious principles, respect, and family harmony. An inclusive approach and open communication are crucial for the success of interfaith marriages.

### Psychological Perspective

#### *Definition and Scope of Psychology in Marriage*

Psychology is crucial in understanding marriage dynamics by exploring behaviors, emotions, and interactions. According to Gottman, it involves studying communication, conflict resolution, and emotional intimacy. Fowers and Olson's research shows effective communication, empathy, and emotional support significantly increase marital satisfaction, with good conflict-handling skills being primary predictors of marital happiness.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> H. Smith, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 85.

<sup>36</sup> W. Doniger, *The Laws of Manu* (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), 274; A. Ghosh, *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198).

<sup>37</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1963), 342.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112; Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 187.

<sup>39</sup> J. M. Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Harmony Books, 2015), 72; T. N. Bradbury, F. D. Fincham & S. R. H. "Beach, Research on the Nature and Determinants of Marital Satisfaction: A Decade in

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Additionally, marriage psychology also encompasses the study of stress and how couples cope with it. According to Bodenmann, stress can negatively impact marital relationships, but couples with effective coping strategies are more likely to maintain healthy relationships.<sup>40</sup> This is supported by research in Indonesia, which shows that couples who can adapt to changes and life challenges have higher levels of marital satisfaction.<sup>41</sup>

Psychology also explores the role of personality in marriage. Couples with similar personalities often have more harmonious relationships. Research by Karney and Bradbury found that personality compatibility between partners is an important factor in predicting marital success.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, psychology provides deep insights into various aspects that influence the dynamics of marriage, helping couples and professionals understand and improve marital relationships. The references used in this explanation are from various reputable studies and publications that include the latest findings in the field of marriage psychology.

### Psychological Dynamics in Interfaith Marriage

#### *Anxiety and Conflict*

Interfaith marriages bring unique psychological challenges, including anxiety and conflict. Anxiety arises from fear of family rejection, pressure to conform to a partner's religious practices, and maintaining one's religious identity. Pargament notes anxiety stems from perceived threats to religious identity and potential family discord.<sup>43</sup>

Conflict in interfaith marriages often arises from differences in religious beliefs and practices. These conflicts can manifest in various aspects of married life, including child-rearing, dietary restrictions, and holiday celebrations. As noted by Benokraitis, disagreements over religious practices can lead to significant marital discord, especially when both partners are deeply committed to their respective faiths.<sup>44</sup> This is supported by research conducted by Berry, who found that couples in interfaith marriages report

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Review". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 No. 4 (2000), 964-980, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00597.x>; B. J. Fowers & D. H. Olson, "ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale: A Brief Research and Clinical Tool". *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7 No. 2 (1993), 176-185, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0893-3200.7.2.176>

<sup>40</sup> G. Bodenmann, *Dyadic coping and its significance for marital functioning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47.

<sup>41</sup> H. Wijaya, *Pengaruh Coping Strategies terhadap Kepuasan Pernikahan pada Pasangan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 2019), 103.

<sup>42</sup> B. R. Karney & T. N. Bradbury, "The Longitudinal Course of Marital Quality and Stability: A Review of Theory, Method, and Research". *Psychological Bulletin*, 118 No. 1 (1995), 3-34, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0033-2909.118.1.3>

<sup>43</sup> K. I. Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy: Understanding and Addressing the Sacred* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 234.

<sup>44</sup> N. V. Benokraitis, *Marriages and Families: Changes, Choices, and Constraint* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2014), 156.



## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

higher levels of conflict compared to those in same-faith marriages, particularly around religious holidays and rituals.<sup>45</sup>

### *Adaptation and Adjustment*

Despite the potential for anxiety and conflict, many interfaith couples develop effective strategies to adapt and adjust to their religious differences. One common strategy is the practice of religious pluralism within the marriage, where each partner respects and participates in the other's religious traditions. This approach fosters mutual respect and understanding, which are crucial for marital harmony. According to Wolfinger, couples who embrace religious pluralism often report higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of conflict.<sup>46</sup>

Another strategy is establishing common values like compassion, honesty, and respect, transcending religious doctrines. Patel notes that prioritizing shared values helps interfaith couples navigate differences. Communication is crucial for expressing needs and concerns, fostering understanding and compromise.<sup>47</sup> Gottman emphasizes open, empathetic communication for resolving conflicts and maintaining marital satisfaction.<sup>48</sup>

### *Psychological Well-being*

Interfaith marriages can have complex effects on the psychological well-being of couples and their children. For couples, the psychological well-being is often influenced by the quality of their relationship and their ability to manage religious differences constructively. Research by Mahoney indicates that couples in successful interfaith marriages often exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those who struggle with religious conflicts.<sup>49</sup>

Children in interfaith families may face unique psychological challenges, particularly regarding their religious identity and belonging. According to Kelley and Kelley, children of interfaith marriages often experience confusion and anxiety as they navigate differing religious expectations from each parent.<sup>50</sup> However, these children can also benefit from a broader perspective on religious diversity, which can enhance their cognitive flexibility and tolerance. This dual impact is further explored by Liu, who found that children from interfaith families often develop a more inclusive and pluralistic worldview, contributing positively to their psychological development.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> J. W. Berry, "Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview". In S. S. J. Wong & L. B. P. Lok (Eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural and Multicultural Personality Assessment* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 82.

<sup>46</sup> N. H. Wolfinger, *Understanding the Divorce Cycle: The Children of Divorce in Their Own Marriages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>47</sup> E. Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2020), 113.

<sup>48</sup> Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, 96.

<sup>49</sup> A. Mahoney, "Religion in Families, 1999-2009: A Relational Spirituality Framework". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 2010, 78.

<sup>50</sup> H. H. Kelley & E. W. Kelley, *Children of Interfaith Marriages: Navigating Religious Identity and Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2013), 142.

<sup>51</sup> M. Liu, *Psychological Adjustment of Children in Interfaith Families* (Beijing: China University Press, 2018), 134.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

### *Counseling and Psychological Support*

Counseling and psychological support play crucial roles in assisting interfaith couples to navigate their unique challenges. Marital counseling can provide a safe space for couples to discuss their religious differences and develop strategies to manage conflicts. As noted by Perel, counselors can help interfaith couples identify common ground and foster mutual respect, which are essential for a harmonious relationship.<sup>52</sup>

Pre-marital counseling is particularly beneficial for interfaith couples, as it allows them to address potential issues before they arise. According to Markman, pre-marital counseling can equip couples with the tools they need to handle religious conflicts and strengthen their communication skills.<sup>53</sup> This proactive approach can significantly enhance the long-term stability of interfaith marriages.

Additionally, support groups for interfaith couples can provide valuable peer support and shared experiences. These groups offer a sense of community and belonging, which can alleviate feelings of isolation and anxiety. As highlighted by Ibrahim, participation in support groups helps interfaith couples develop a network of support, which can be critical for their psychological well-being.<sup>54</sup>

### **Sociological Perspective**

#### *Definition of Sociology in Marriage*

Sociology examines marriage as a social institution shaped by societal structures, norms, and values. It's not just a personal contract but a socially recognized institution reflecting cultural, economic, and political contexts. The structural-functional approach views marriage as fulfilling essential functions like regulating behavior, socializing children, and ensuring social continuity.<sup>55</sup>

Conflict theory, another sociological perspective, examines how power dynamics and inequalities within marriage reflect and perpetuate broader social inequalities. According to Collins, marriage can be a site of conflict where issues of gender, class, and race intersect, often reproducing societal hierarchies.<sup>56</sup> This perspective highlights how marital roles and expectations are influenced by societal power structures and can lead to unequal distributions of resources and responsibilities within the family.

Symbolic interactionism, a third sociological perspective, focuses on the day-to-day interactions between spouses and how these interactions create and sustain the meanings of marriage. As Blumer explains, marriage is constructed through the symbols and meanings that couples attach to their roles and interactions, which are influenced by societal norms and expectations.<sup>57</sup> This perspective emphasizes the subjective

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<sup>52</sup> E. Perel, *The State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 203.

<sup>53</sup> H. J. Markman, *Fighting for Your Marriage: Positive Steps for Preventing Divorce and Preserving a Lasting Love* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 54.

<sup>54</sup> R. Ibrahim, *Interfaith Couples: Navigating Religious Differences in Marriage* (Jakarta: Penerbit Gramedia, 2020), 121.

<sup>55</sup> J. J. Macionis, *Sociology* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2019), 409.

<sup>56</sup> R. Collins, *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 222.

<sup>57</sup> H. Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 76.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

experiences of individuals within marriage and how these experiences are shaped by social context.

In Indonesia, sociologists have also examined marriage through the lens of cultural and religious practices. According to Surbakti, marriage in Indonesia is deeply influenced by cultural traditions and religious beliefs, which play a significant role in shaping marital practices and expectations.<sup>58</sup> This highlights the importance of considering local contexts and cultural diversity when studying marriage as a social institution.

### *Social Norms and Values*

Social norms and values significantly shape society's view of interfaith marriage, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and policies. Norms are unwritten rules about acceptable behavior, while values are deeply held beliefs guiding actions. Interfaith marriages challenge these norms, often seen as threats to religious identity, community cohesion, and transmission of beliefs.<sup>59</sup>

In Western societies, there has been a gradual shift towards greater acceptance of interfaith marriages, reflecting broader trends towards individualism and pluralism. According to Pew Research Center, the increasing acceptance of interfaith marriages in the United States is linked to changing social norms that emphasize personal choice, autonomy, and the value of diversity.<sup>60</sup> This shift is also evident in other Western countries where secularization and multiculturalism have become more prominent.

Conversely, in more religiously conservative societies, interfaith marriages may still be met with significant resistance. In Indonesia, for instance, interfaith marriages often face legal and social obstacles due to the strong influence of religious norms and values. As noted by Karyadi, Indonesian law requires couples to share the same religion to be legally married, reflecting the societal value placed on religious conformity and the preservation of religious identity.<sup>61</sup> This legal requirement often forces couples into difficult decisions, such as converting to their partner's religion or seeking legal recognition abroad.

Social norms and values impact interfaith marriages, influencing relationships with family, friends, and the community. Smock and Gupta note that interfaith couples often face ostracism, familial disapproval, and community pressure, adding stress and conflict. These pressures affect marital stability and satisfaction, and influence child-rearing decisions.<sup>62</sup> Seidman highlights strategies like exposing children to both

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<sup>58</sup> I. Surbakti, *Cultural and Religious Influences on Marriage in Indonesia* (Bandung: Penerbit ITB, 2018), 134.

<sup>59</sup> R. D. Putnam & D. E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 237.

<sup>60</sup> Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2015), 45.

<sup>61</sup> L. Karyadi, *Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Legal and Social Implications* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2017), 99.

<sup>62</sup> P.J. Smock & S. Gupta, "Interfaith Marriage in America: Trends and Implications". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, (2011), 152.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

religions, choosing one, or raising them secularly, shaped by societal norms and the couple's beliefs.<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, the sociological perspective helps understand interfaith marriage by examining social norms, power dynamics, and symbolic meanings. It highlights the complexities faced by interfaith couples and emphasizes the importance of considering cultural and religious contexts in analyzing marriage.

### *Social Dynamics in Interfaith Marriage* *Stigma and Discrimination*

Interfaith marriages, despite their growing prevalence in many parts of the world, often encounter significant social challenges, including stigma and discrimination. These challenges arise from societal norms that favor religious homogeneity and view interfaith unions with suspicion or disapproval. This section explores the various forms of stigma and discrimination faced by interfaith couples, drawing on recent sociological studies and publications.

One of the primary sources of stigma in interfaith marriages is the perception that these unions undermine religious purity and continuity. According to a study by Badran, interfaith couples often face prejudice and negative stereotypes, which can lead to social exclusion and marginalization.<sup>64</sup> This stigmatization can manifest in various ways, from subtle social snubs to overt acts of discrimination, affecting the couple's social interactions and sense of belonging.

Discrimination against interfaith couples can also be institutional. In some countries, legal and bureaucratic hurdles are deliberately imposed to discourage or complicate interfaith marriages. For example, in Indonesia, legal barriers exist that make it difficult for interfaith couples to marry within the country. As Karyadi notes, Indonesian law requires couples to adhere to the same religion to register their marriage, forcing many interfaith couples to marry abroad or convert religions.<sup>65</sup> These legal obstacles reflect and reinforce societal discrimination, highlighting the intersection of social norms and institutional policies in perpetuating stigma.

Interfaith couples often face discrimination from family, friends, and the community. Pew Research Center reports negative reactions, including parental disapproval, strained friendships, and community ostracism, adding stress to relationships.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, they may internalize societal prejudices, leading to guilt, shame, and inadequacy. Surbakti notes this internalized stigma undermines self-esteem and hampers communication and conflict resolution within marriages.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> S. Seidman, *Interfaith Families: Personal Narratives and Cultural Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 114.

<sup>64</sup> M. Badran, *Stigma and Discrimination in Interfaith Marriages: A Sociological Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 47.

<sup>65</sup> Karyadi, *Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia*, 105.

<sup>66</sup> Pew Research Center, *Interfaith Marriage in America: Trends and Attitudes* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2021), 30.

<sup>67</sup> I. Surbakti, *Cultural and Religious Influences on Marriage in Indonesia* (Bandung: Penerbit ITB, 2019), 89.



## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

### *Family Interaction*

Interfaith marriages not only affect the couple involved but also have significant implications for their relationships with extended family and the broader community. This section examines the impact of interfaith marriages on family interactions, drawing on recent sociological research and case studies.

One of the most profound impacts of interfaith marriage is the potential strain it places on relationships with extended family members. According to a study by Williams and Sobolewski, interfaith couples often face resistance and disapproval from their families of origin, particularly when strong religious traditions are involved.<sup>68</sup> Family members may view the interfaith marriage as a betrayal of religious values and cultural heritage, leading to conflicts and estrangement.

These familial conflicts can manifest in various ways, from passive-aggressive behavior and silent treatment to overt confrontations and ultimatums. As reported by Bagir, many interfaith couples in Indonesia face significant pressure from their families to conform to religious expectations, including demands to convert or adhere to religious practices that align with the family's beliefs.<sup>69</sup> This pressure can create emotional stress and division within the family, affecting the couple's relationship and their sense of familial support.

In some cases, interfaith marriages can lead to positive changes in family dynamics by promoting greater understanding and tolerance. According to a study by Seidman, some families eventually come to accept and embrace the interfaith marriage, leading to enriched family interactions and the broadening of cultural and religious perspectives.<sup>70</sup> This acceptance often requires time, dialogue, and mutual respect, highlighting the potential for interfaith marriages to foster inclusivity and diversity within families.

Beyond the immediate family, interfaith marriages also impact relationships with the broader community. Community acceptance can vary widely depending on the prevailing social norms and cultural attitudes towards religious diversity. As noted by Putnam and Campbell, communities with high levels of religious pluralism and tolerance are more likely to accept and support interfaith marriages, whereas more homogenous and conservative communities may resist and stigmatize these unions.<sup>71</sup>

Community support, or the lack thereof, can significantly influence the well-being of interfaith couples. Positive community support can provide a network of social resources and emotional support, helping couples navigate the challenges of interfaith marriage. Conversely, community rejection can isolate the couple and exacerbate feelings of alienation and stress. As highlighted by Smock and Gupta the role of community in supporting or challenging interfaith marriages is critical to the couple's social integration and psychological well-being.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> J. Williams & J. Sobolewski, *Interfaith Marriage: Family Dynamics and Social Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 314.

<sup>69</sup> Z. A. Bagir, *Interfaith Marriages in Indonesia: Navigating Religious and Cultural Challenges* (Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan, 2018), 76.

<sup>70</sup> S. Seidman, *Interfaith Families: Personal Narratives and Cultural Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 202.

<sup>71</sup> R. D. Putnam & D.E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020, p. 150.

<sup>72</sup> P. J. Smock & S. Gupta "Interfaith Marriage in America: Trends and Implications." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, (2020), 137.



## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

In conclusion, interfaith marriage involves complex challenges like stigma, discrimination, and family interactions rooted in societal norms. Despite this, it promotes understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. Sociological research highlights the need for dialogue and support to foster acceptance and integration of interfaith couples.

### *Social Integration*

Interfaith couples face unique challenges in integrating their religious identities into daily life. Key strategies include creating blended traditions, engaging in open dialogue about religious practices, and participating in both religious communities. For instance, they may celebrate both Christmas and Eid, forming new traditions that honor both faiths. This practice respects both partners' beliefs and fosters unity and mutual respect. Open and honest communication about religious beliefs is crucial. According to Pew Research Center, interfaith couples who regularly discuss their faiths have a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's beliefs, aiding in conflict resolution.<sup>73</sup>

Community support also plays a vital role in the social integration of interfaith couples. Engaging with both religious communities can provide a network of support and acceptance, which is essential for the couple's social well-being. Williams and Lawler found that interfaith couples who actively participate in both religious communities report higher levels of relationship satisfaction and social support.<sup>74</sup> This involvement helps interfaith couples feel connected and valued within both faith communities.

In the Indonesian context, the sociocultural environment adds another layer of complexity to the social integration of interfaith couples. In a predominantly Muslim society, interfaith marriages can sometimes face societal scrutiny and resistance. However, research by Rofiah indicates that interfaith couples who engage in community service and social activities often find acceptance and support from their communities, which facilitates social integration.<sup>75</sup> This acceptance is crucial for the couple's integration into the broader social fabric.

The role of education in promoting understanding and acceptance of interfaith relationships cannot be overstated. Educational initiatives that promote religious tolerance and understanding can help reduce societal prejudices against interfaith marriages. According to a study by Notoatmodjo, educational programs that focus on interfaith dialogue and cooperation can significantly enhance social integration by fostering mutual respect and understanding among different religious communities.<sup>76</sup>

### *Case Studies*

Examining interfaith couples like John and Aisha, a Christian-Muslim pair, reveals practical social integration strategies. They created a shared space for religious practices at home, celebrated major holidays like Christmas and Eid together, and blended

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<sup>73</sup> Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study*, 24.

<sup>74</sup> R. Williams & M. Lawler, *Interfaith Marriage: A Sociological Perspective* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 145.

<sup>75</sup> S. Rofiah, *Interfaith Marriages in Indonesia: Navigating Cultural and Religious Challenges*. (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press, 2019), 78.

<sup>76</sup> S. Notoatmodjo, *Educational Initiatives for Religious Tolerance* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017), 102.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

traditions, fostering a supportive community and highlighting the importance of inclusive family traditions.<sup>77</sup>

Maria and Arjun, a Catholic-Hindu couple in India, overcame interfaith marriage challenges by focusing on shared values and cultural similarities, participating in both religious festivals and community events, gaining family and community acceptance through proactive engagement and mutual respect (Patel and Gupta).<sup>78</sup> This case illustrates how active participation in both religious communities can enhance social integration and family acceptance.

In Indonesia, Dewi and Ahmad, a Hindu-Muslim couple, overcame social challenges through family support. Despite initial resistance, they educated their families about mutual respect, leading to acceptance and participation in each other's religious celebrations, highlighting education's role in social integration.<sup>79</sup>

Another example comes from a study by Setiawan and Sari, which examined the experiences of interfaith couples in Jakarta. The study revealed that couples who were transparent about their religious practices and open to compromise experienced less social tension and greater acceptance from their communities.<sup>80</sup> This transparency and willingness to adapt played a crucial role in their successful social integration.

Priya and Karim, a Buddhist-Muslim couple in Malaysia, faced legal challenges due to religious laws. Support from NGOs advocating for interfaith marriage rights was crucial in navigating legal complexities and achieving social integration.<sup>81</sup> This case underscores the need for supportive legal frameworks and advocacy to protect the rights of interfaith couples.

In Europe, the case of Sarah and David, a Jewish-Christian couple in France, provides another example of successful social integration. They faced initial resistance from their respective religious communities but overcame these challenges by focusing on their common values and shared cultural heritage. According to Cohen and Volker, their commitment to mutual respect and active engagement in interfaith dialogue helped them build a supportive community around their marriage.<sup>82</sup> This case illustrates the importance of interfaith dialogue and cultural commonalities in fostering social integration.

The social integration of interfaith couples involves a complex interplay of negotiation, compromise, and community engagement. By creating new traditions, engaging in open dialogue, and participating in both religious communities, interfaith couples can navigate the challenges of integrating their religious identities into daily social life. Case studies from various cultural contexts, including the United States,

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<sup>77</sup> J. Smith, *Bridging Faiths: Christian-Muslim Marriages in the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 203.

<sup>78</sup> S. Patel & R. Gupta, *Love Across Borders: Catholic-Hindu Marriages in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2021), 96.

<sup>79</sup> A. Santoso, *A Family Dynamics in Interfaith Marriages in Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2020), 112.

<sup>80</sup> B. Setiawan & M. Sari, *The Social Integration of Interfaith Couples in Jakarta* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2019), 51.

<sup>81</sup> R. Hassan & K. Wong, *Legal Challenges and Social Integration of Interfaith Couples in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2018), 88.

<sup>82</sup> E. Cohen & M. Volker, *Cultural Heritage and Interfaith Marriages in Europe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2021), 174.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Europe, demonstrate that with mutual respect, understanding, and support, interfaith couples can overcome social challenges and build strong, integrated relationships.

### CONCLUSION

This article explores interfaith marriage through the perspectives of theology, psychology, and sociology, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of this phenomenon. From a theological perspective, the article discusses how various religious traditions view interfaith marriage and the importance of doctrinal compatibility in maintaining marital stability. For example, in Islam, interfaith marriage is strictly regulated to preserve the integrity of faith within the family, while in Christian traditions, particularly Catholicism, interfaith marriage requires dispensation and a commitment to maintaining religious beliefs within the family. This theological perspective shows that despite differences in doctrinal interpretation, there is a common effort to maintain religious integrity within marriage.

From a psychological perspective, the article explores the emotional challenges faced by interfaith couples. Research indicates that couples often face additional stress due to differences in beliefs that can affect relationship dynamics and mental well-being. For instance, couples may experience conflicts related to religious practices and child-rearing, which can lead to emotional tension. However, studies also show that with good communication and mutual understanding, couples can overcome these challenges and achieve a harmonious relationship. This psychological perspective highlights the importance of emotional support and coping skills in maintaining the stability of interfaith marriages.

From a sociological perspective, the article analyzes the impact of interfaith marriages on social structures. Studies show that interfaith marriages can promote interreligious dialogue and increase tolerance and understanding among different religious communities. However, such marriages can also face resistance from more conservative communities that see them as a threat to doctrinal purity. In Indonesia, for example, interfaith couples often have to navigate complex legal and social challenges, including social stigma and bureaucratic obstacles. This sociological perspective emphasizes the importance of supportive legal and social frameworks to accommodate and facilitate interfaith marriages.

Thus, this article concludes that interfaith marriage has profound implications at both individual and community levels and requires a multidisciplinary approach to understand and manage the challenges arising from religious differences in marriage.

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