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**CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES IN INTERRELIGIOUS MARRIAGE: A CASE STUDY  
OF CULTURAL INTERACTION AND CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

**STRATEGI PENYESUAIAN BUDAYA DALAM PERNIKAHAN BEDA AGAMA: STUDI KASUS  
TENTANG INTERAKSI DAN KONFLIK BUDAYA DI LINGKUNGAN KELUARGA**

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**Abstract.** This paper examines cultural adjustment strategies in interfaith marriages within the family environment. Interfaith marriages often present complex cultural challenges, as partners must adapt to different beliefs, traditions, and values that may conflict. This study aims to analyze the cultural adjustment strategies carried out by couples in interfaith marriages, with a focus on cultural interactions and conflicts that arise in the family environment. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with couples who have different religious backgrounds and have been married for at least 5 years. Data analysis was carried out through coding and thematic processes. The results of the study show that couples in interfaith marriages adopt various cultural adjustment strategies to overcome cultural interactions and conflicts in the family environment. These strategies include com

promise, mutual understanding, open communication, and respect for differences. Couples are also looking for creative solutions to facilitate family harmony, such as incorporating traditions from both religions in family celebrations. In addition, this research also provides valuable insights for family welfare professionals and marriage counselors in helping couples in interfaith marriages deal with emerging cultural challenges.

**Keywords:** Interfaith marriage, cultural adjustment, cultural interaction, cultural conflict.

**Abstrak.** Tulisan ini meneliti tentang strategi penyesuaian budaya dalam pernikahan beda agama dalam lingkungan keluarga. Pernikahan beda agama sering kali menghadirkan tantangan budaya yang kompleks, karena pasangan harus beradaptasi dengan perbedaan keyakinan, tradisi, dan nilai-nilai yang mungkin bertentangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi penyesuaian budaya yang dilakukan oleh pasangan dalam pernikahan beda agama, dengan fokus pada interaksi dan konflik budaya yang muncul di lingkungan keluarga. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pasangan yang memiliki latar belakang agama yang berbeda dan telah menikah selama minimal 5 tahun. Analisis data dilakukan melalui proses pengkodean dan tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pasangan dalam pernikahan beda agama mengadopsi berbagai strategi penyesuaian budaya untuk mengatasi interaksi dan konflik budaya di lingkungan keluarga. Strategi-strategi ini mencakup kompromi, saling pengertian, komunikasi terbuka, dan penghormatan terhadap perbedaan. Pasangan juga mencari solusi kreatif untuk memfasilitasi keharmonisan keluarga, seperti menggabungkan tradisi-tradisi dari kedua agama dalam perayaan keluarga. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga memberikan wawasan yang berharga bagi profesional kesejahteraan keluarga dan penasihat pernikahan dalam membantu pasangan dalam pernikahan beda agama menghadapi tantangan budaya yang muncul.

**Kata Kunci:** Pernikahan beda agama, Penyesuaian budaya, Interaksi budaya, Konflik budaya.

## INTRODUCTION

Interfaith marriage is an increasingly common social phenomenon in today's society. These marriages involve couples coming from different religious backgrounds, which introduces diverse cultural dynamics into their relationship. Cultural interactions and conflicts in interfaith marriages are often complex challenges for couples and their families. Therefore, cultural adjustment strategies are very important to learn and understand.

In the context of interfaith marriage, cultural differences can include differences in beliefs, values, religious rituals, and family traditions. When couples with different religious backgrounds come together, they bring different value systems and different ways of life into their marriages. In the family environment, these differences often give rise to complex cultural interactions and conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Previous studies have shown that religious differences in marriage can affect important aspects of family life, such as communication, children's education, meeting spiritual needs, and gender roles. Ineffective cultural interaction can lead to tension and conflict among couples as well as between members of the wider family. Therefore, an effective cultural adjustment strategy is needed to address these challenges.<sup>2</sup>

One of the cultural adjustment strategies often used in interfaith marriages is open and honest communication. Effective communication plays an important role in building understanding, appreciating, and respecting cultural differences between couples and their families. In the context of interfaith marriage, open communication helps overcome stereotypes, prejudices, and concerns that may arise.

In addition, a deep knowledge and understanding of each partner's culture is also important. Couples need to learn about each other's religious beliefs, values, and practices. In-depth knowledge of a couple's culture can help reduce incomprehension, and increase empathy and understanding between them.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to communication and cultural knowledge, flexibility and openness are also needed in cultural adjustment in interfaith marriages. Couples must be ready to change their expectations and expectations, and accept differences as they arise. The ability to adapt and respect cultural differences is key to establishing harmony in the marriage and family environment.<sup>4</sup>

Research on interfaith marriage shows that couples who successfully overcome cultural conflicts in their marriages tend to have higher relationship satisfaction and quality. Studies also show that social support from family and friends can play an important role in helping couples deal with the challenges of cultural adjustment. In a family environment, support from older and younger family members can help couples build strong bonds and overcome cultural conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

However, it should be noted that cultural adjustment strategies in interfaith marriages are not always easy to implement. Every couple and family has their own unique dynamics. Factors such as cultural background, degree of individual openness, and cultural flexibility can influence the success of cultural adjustment strategies. Therefore, it is important to understand

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<sup>1</sup> Bhuiyan, M. N. U., & Aktar, S. (2017). Interfaith marriage and conflict management: A study on couples from different religious backgrounds in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 5(1), 59-72.

<sup>2</sup> Kosmin, B. A., & Keysar, A. (2009). *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008): Summary report*. Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture..

<sup>3</sup> Perry, S. L., & Fahmy, C. (2010). Religious intermarriage in the United States: Patterns and recent trends. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(4), 806-825.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. Oxford University Press..

<sup>5</sup> Waite, L. J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. Broadway Books.

the cultural context of couples and families in depth.<sup>6</sup>

Case studies of cultural interactions and conflicts in interfaith marriages can provide valuable insights into effective cultural adjustment strategies. Through this research, we can study the experiences of couples who have faced these challenges and understand the factors that influence successful cultural adjustment.<sup>7</sup>

In this research, case studies will be conducted on cultural interactions and conflicts in the family environment of interfaith marriage couples. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews with their spouses and family members. The purpose of this study was to analyze the cultural adjustment strategies used by such couples and their impact on family relationships.<sup>8</sup>

With a better understanding of cultural adjustment strategies in interfaith marriage, we can provide better recommendations and advice to couples and families facing these challenges. The study is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the development of knowledge about cultural interactions in interfaith marriages and help promote understanding and harmony in diverse family environments.<sup>9</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with couples who have different religious backgrounds and have been married for at least 5 years and for secondary data collected through literature sources, both from literature books, websites, journals and looking for existing research sources. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive-analysis techniques, to make it easier for researchers to describe the results of this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Factors Influencing Interfaith Marriage Interactions

There are several factors that influence interaction in interfaith marriages including:

#### 1) Differences in Beliefs

One of the main factors influencing interactions in interfaith marriages is differences in beliefs. Each religion has different teachings, rites, and demands. These differences can cause conflict and tension in the couple's relationship. Research conducted by Bhagat et al. (2018) shows that differences in beliefs can lead to different views on important issues in daily life, such as the choice of children's education, religious practices, and celebration of

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<sup>6</sup>Włodarczyk, A., & Loboda, T. (2019). Inter marriage in Poland: Attitudes, experiences, and consequences. *Journal of Family Issues*, 40(6), 788-813.

<sup>7</sup>Yilmaz, S., & Ergüner-Tekinalp, B. (2020). Religiosity and psychological well-being among Turkish women married to Arab men: The mediating role of cultural adjustment. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 14(1), 39-58.

<sup>8</sup>Chae, M. H., & Foley, P. F. (2010). An intercultural communication study of intercultural marital conflict: Focusing on conflicts due to cultural value differences. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 41(2), 203-225.

<sup>9</sup>Kellas, J. K., & Stohl, C. (2018). Constructing intercultural conflict competence in relationships: Development and validation of the Intercultural Conflict Competence Scale (ICCS). *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 63, 73-86.

holidays. Therefore, it is important for interfaith couples to have a good understanding of each other's beliefs and seek understanding in dealing with such differences.<sup>10</sup>

## 2) Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are also a significant factor in influencing interactions in interfaith marriages. Culture encompasses the different values, norms, traditions, and customs between couples. A study conducted by Kumar (2019) found that cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in interfaith marriage relationships. For example, differences in how to communicate, how to educate children, or even in trivial matters such as the type of food consumed. Therefore, it is important for couples to respect and get to know each other's culture, and be willing to learn and compromise in the face of these differences.<sup>11</sup>

## 3) Values and Expectations

Every individual has different values and expectations in marriage. When couples have religious differences, those values and expectations can be a source of conflict. Research conducted by Dilmaghani et al. (2017) shows that differences in values and expectations can cause difficulties in determining priorities, gender roles, and life goals in marriage. Couples need to communicate openly and honestly about their values and expectations, and seek understanding in achieving common goals.

## 4) Social Support

Social support from the surrounding environment also plays an important role in interfaith marriage interactions. Couples are often faced with pressure and expectations from their family, friends, and community. Research conducted by Güngör (2016) shows that positive social support can increase the satisfaction and well-being of interfaith couples. Conversely, social pressure and stigmatization can exacerbate interactions in marriage. Therefore, it is important for couples to build a positive social support network and seek help from appropriate sources in dealing with challenges in interfaith marriages.<sup>12</sup>

## 5) Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills

Effective communication and conflict resolution skills also influence interactions in interfaith marriages. Research conducted by Khan et al. (2020) found that poor communication and lack of conflict resolution skills can exacerbate conflicts and tensions in interfaith marriage relationships. Couples need to learn how to communicate well, listen to each other understandingly, and learn healthy, constructive conflict resolution skills.<sup>13</sup>

Interfaith marriage brings unique challenges in the interaction between couples. Factors such as differences in beliefs, culture, values, social support, communication, and conflict

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<sup>10</sup>Bhagat, V., Bhullar, N., & Ghuman, R. (2018). Interfaith Marriages: Challenges and Opportunities. In *Multifaith Views in Spiritual Care* (pp. 97-113). Springer.

<sup>11</sup>Dilmaghani, M., Kafi, M., & Amirsardari, L. (2017). Conflict Management Styles in Intercultural Marriages. *International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies*, 5(2), 10-16.

<sup>12</sup>Güngör, D. (2016). Interreligious and Intercultural Marriage: A Comparative Study Between Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 47(3), 403-420.

<sup>13</sup>Khan, M. F., Bhatti, S., & Atta, M. (2020). Role of Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution Styles on Marital Satisfaction among Interfaith Couples. *Journal*.

resolution skills have a significant role in influencing such interactions. It is important for couples to have a good understanding of these factors and be willing to communicate openly, respect each other, and seek understanding in the face of differences. A mutually supportive and inclusive approach will help build harmonious relationships in interfaith marriages.

### **Cultural Conflict in Interfaith Marriage**

Interfaith marriage is a situation in which couples of different religious beliefs decide to marry. Religious differences in marriage often lead to cultural conflicts, as each couple brings value systems, traditions, and practices into their relationship. Cultural conflicts in interfaith marriages can arise from different views on religion, religious celebrations, gender roles, parenting, and a host of other issues. There are several interesting issues related to cultural conflicts caused by interfaith marriage, including:<sup>14</sup>

#### 1) Different views on religion

Interfaith couples often have different religious beliefs and practices. They may have different views on God, worship rituals, scriptures, and the role of religion in daily life. Conflicts can arise when couples are unable to come to an agreement on the religious practices to be carried out in their family.

#### 2) Religious celebrations

Every religion has important religious celebrations for its people. Cultural conflicts can arise when interfaith couples disagree on celebrating these religious celebrations. For example, a couple's family may celebrate Christmas and Eid, but these actions can create conflict if the couple does not agree to celebrate one or both of those celebrations.

#### 3) Gender roles

Religion often influences the pattern of gender roles in society. Cultural conflicts in interfaith marriages can arise when couples have different expectations about gender roles in the household. For example, one partner may wish for the wife to take on a more domestic, traditional role, while the other spouse would want to take on a more equal role.

#### 4) Children's education

One of the most frequent cultural conflicts in interfaith marriages is the education of children. Couples may have differences in which religion to teach their children, or whether they will be taught about both religions. This can be a significant source of conflict, as religion is often an important part of an individual's identity.<sup>15</sup>

There are several factors that cause cultural conflict in interfaith marriages. First, differences in religious beliefs and values can create cultural gaps that are difficult to overcome. Couples must adapt to these differences and find ways to respect each other.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Miller, A. S., & Hoffmann, J. P. (1995). Risk and religion: An explanation of gender differences in religiosity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34(1), 63-75.

<sup>15</sup>Ansari, A. (2022). Provisions For Family Alimony In The Perspectives Of The Quran And Hadith. *Al Hakam: The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law and Gender Issues*, 2(2), 148-167. doi: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35896/alhakam.v2i2.350>

<sup>16</sup>Myers, S. M., & Booth, A. (2002). Marriage, religious attendance, and earnings. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(1), 261-275.

Second, family and community influences can exacerbate cultural conflicts. Families and communities may have strong expectations about how interfaith marriages should be conducted, and they can influence couples with social pressure.<sup>17</sup>

Third, lack of effective communication can also lead to cultural conflict in interfaith marriages. Couples need to discuss and seek a better understanding of each other's religious beliefs, values, and practices.<sup>18</sup>

Although cultural conflicts in interfaith marriages can be complicated, there are several solutions that can help couples overcome such conflicts, including:<sup>19</sup>

1) Open and honest communication

Couples should communicate openly and honestly about each other's religious beliefs, values, and practices. They need to understand each other's perspectives and look for common ground.

2) Respect for differences

One of the important keys in overcoming cultural conflict is mutual respect for differences. Couples should accept that differences in religion and culture are natural, and they should strive to appreciate and respect those differences.

3) Looking for a compromise

Couples need to find a compromise that is acceptable to both. They may try to combine some religious practices of both religions in their family or make agreements about their children's religious education.

4) Marriage counseling

If cultural conflicts in interfaith marriages cannot be resolved in the expected way, couples can seek help from an experienced marriage counselor. Marriage counseling can help couples explore their cultural conflicts in a safe way and help them find appropriate solutions.

Interfaith marriages often lead to cultural conflicts due to differences in beliefs, religious practices, and values. However, with good communication, mutual respect, finding compromises, and perhaps the help of marriage counseling, couples can overcome these cultural conflicts and build a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship.

### **Cultural Adjustment Strategies in Interfaith Marriage**

In facing various tests in the household, of course, we must prepare various ways to minimize the possibility of conflict occurring, so instead of that we must have a strategy for adjusting habits and so on to our partners, differences in thoughts even though religion is the same but still exists and often occurs, especially our partner's religion is different, of course it

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<sup>17</sup>Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2009). Stress and reactivity to daily relationship experiences: How stress hinders adaptive processes in marriage. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(3), 435-450.

<sup>18</sup>Schoenfeld, E. A., Bierman, K. L., Heinrichs, B. S., & Nix, R. L. (2016). Predicting relationship conflict and satisfaction from couples' prenatal expectations. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(3), 339-349.

<sup>19</sup>Van Lange, P. A., Rusbult, C. E., Drigotas, S. M., Arriaga, X. B., Witcher, B. S., & Cox, C. L. (1997). Willingness to sacrifice in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(6), 1373-1395.

will be different to all existing aspects. Therefore, strategies must be prepared for adjusting the customs of ordinary others, including:

*First*, open and honest communication is an important strategy in interfaith marriage. Couples should share their beliefs, values, and expectations openly.<sup>20</sup> This helps to understand and respect cultural differences. In addition, in interfaith marriages, open communication and understanding between spouses and families is very important. Maintaining honor and respecting cultural differences are key factors for creating harmony in the family environment.<sup>21</sup>

*Second*, Couples should respect and support each other's religious practices. It involves active participation in the religious ceremonies and rituals of the couple, as well as respect for places of worship and religious celebrations. In interfaith marriages, it is important to seek common ground and create balance in the face of cultural differences. Open communication and mutual respect between couples and families are the main keys to overcoming cultural conflicts.<sup>22</sup>

*Third*, Compromise and flexibility are essential in interfaith marriages. Couples must be willing to take a step back, find mutually beneficial solutions, and respect each other's cultural interests.<sup>23</sup> In interfaith marriages, flexibility and good communication are essential. Couples need to be willing to learn and adapt to each other's cultures, as well as resolve cultural conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.<sup>24</sup>

*Fourth*, Couples should seek a deeper understanding of each other's religion and culture. They can attend classes or seminars together, read literature about the couple's religion and culture, or discuss with religious leaders.<sup>25</sup> In interfaith marriages, respect, education, and open interaction are key to overcoming cultural conflicts and maintaining harmonious relationships between couples' families.<sup>26</sup>

*Fifth*, couples can seek support from an inclusive and open social environment. Joining a community that understands interfaith marriage and<sup>27</sup> has similar experiences can help overcome the stresses and difficulties that may arise.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ganesh, S., & Valliappan, K. (2017). Interfaith Marriages: Their Socio-Cultural Impact on the Society. *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 116(10), 25-33.

<sup>21</sup>The results of the interview with Respondent 1 are 31 years old and Muslim, the interview was conducted on June 9, 2023, at 09.54 WIB.

<sup>22</sup>The results of the interview with Respondent 2 aged 28 years and Christian, the interview was conducted on June 9, 2023, at 14.00 WIB.

<sup>23</sup>Jaya, I. G. N. M., & Dewi, I. A. K. (2019). Cultural Adaptation of Husband and Wife from Different Religions in Bali. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 114-123.

<sup>24</sup>The interview with Respondent 3 is 35 years old and Hindu, the interview was conducted on June 11, 2023, at 14.00 WIB.

<sup>25</sup>Yusuf, Y. Q. (2020). Religious Harmony in Interfaith Marriage: A Study of Interfaith Couples in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, 31, 95-110.

<sup>26</sup>The results of the interview with Respondent 4 aged 30 years and Buddhist, the interview was conducted on June 13, 2023, at 09.00 WIB.

<sup>27</sup>Zulfitri, T. (2018). Factors Influencing the Adjustment Process of Interfaith Marriage Couples. *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora*, 11(2), 101-107.

<sup>28</sup>The results of the interview with Respondent 5 aged 33 years and Christian, the interview was conducted on June 13, 2023, at 09.00 WIB.

The key to interfaith marriage is open communication, mutual understanding, and cooperation between spouse and family. By learning and respecting cultural differences, couples can achieve harmony and overcome conflicts that may arise.

## CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of the study is the importance of effective communication between partners and their families. Open and honest communication can help reduce misunderstandings and build trust between couples belonging to different religions. Couples should commit to listening, respecting, and understanding each other's religious views and beliefs. In addition to communication, tolerance and respect for differences are also important aspects of cultural adjustment in interfaith marriages. Couples should be prepared to respect each other's religious traditions and beliefs without feeling threatened or superior. This requires an open attitude and a willingness to learn about your partner's culture and religion. Education and a good understanding of a partner's religion and culture are also important factors in cultural adjustment. The study suggests that couples who have adequate knowledge of each other's religion and culture are better likely to resolve conflict and establish healthy interactions. Continuous religious education and active participation in cultural activities can help couples expand their understanding and feel closer to each other. Another conclusion is the need for compromise and flexibility in cultural adjustment. Couples must be willing to combine elements of their culture and religion to create harmony in their household. This can involve creating new traditions that respect both or adopting practices that respect each other's religious values and beliefs. In the event of a cultural conflict, it is important for couples to seek help from outside sources such as marriage counselors or family and friend support.

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