



## The Concept of Interfaith Marriage: Islam-Catholicism and Its Implications for the Moral Educations of Children

### *Konsep Perkawinan Beda Agama: Islam-Katolik dan Implikasinya Bagi Pendidikan Moral Anak*

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#### Abstract

The focus of this study is to provide an explanation of marriage in Islam and Catholicism and its implications for children's moral education. Interfaith marriages often raise pros and cons in society. Those who disagree think that interfaith marriage violates the rules, so it must be avoided. Meanwhile, for those who agree, consider interfaith marriage as a great gift that must be accepted and lived. In the view of Islam and Catholicism, interfaith marriages are actually permissible and of course follow the rules or provisions of each religion. This theme becomes an interesting topic of discussion in this research. The methods used in this research are the descriptive method and a critical reading of the text. This research does not intend to differentiate between Islamic and Catholic marriages but instead seeks to present Islamic and Catholic views on the concept of interfaith marriage and examine the implications of moral education for children in these two major religions. Islam and Catholicism realize that children are a gift, so they should be formed, educated, and fostered. Parents are primarily responsible for the moral education of their children because from them children learn about life.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Islamic religion believes that interfaith marriage is allowed. This is based on the Islamic religious view, which emphasizes that since humans are born into the world, they are already in a state of faith (Ali, 2002). Muhammad asserts that before the spirit is blown into the human body, it has already declared faith. This is mentioned in the Quran, in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 30:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*"So set your face straight towards the religion of Allah; keep to the nature of Allah, who has created human beings according to that nature". There is no change in the nature of Allah. "That is a straight religion, but most people do not know" (Sura Ar-Rum Verse 30). It is emphasized that Islam is a natural religion, one that is innate to human nature, and that this religion is a blessing that has been bestowed upon humankind (Muhammad, 1993). This indicates that human was born with religion and is naturally a Muslim. As a result, a child who is born has already been bestowed with the blessings of Allah, and this child is both a believer and a Muslim. Marriage is not an easy thing to live. There needs to be mental and physical readiness for the couples who go through it (Suryani, D., & Kudus, 2022).*

Marriage is an event that requires careful planning in preparing for it, this preparation aims to form a family, the smallest unit which is an important foundation for human development (Novitasari, D., Bahari, Y., 2022). In the Catholic religion, interfaith marriage can be done after obtaining a dispensation from the bishop. The Canon Law, or KHK, states that interfaith marriage involving Catholics can be allowed provided that the couple meets the requirements outlined in Canon Law. This means that the Church will grant dispensation to interfaith couples who wish to enter into marriage with the conditions stipulated in Canons 1125 and 1126.. A marriage is considered to be valid in the Catholic religion if it is performed in the presence of a pastor or deacon as an official witness of the church as well as two witnesses from both the bride and groom's families. In addition, the marriage must take place in front of two witnesses from each of the bride and groom's families. Furthermore, the wedding needs to have witnesses who come from both the bride's and groom's families. It is conceivable for a marriage to be found to be invalid even if there was only one person present to witness the event.

Therefore, a marriage between two individuals with different religions is referred to as a "blessing" in the Catholic Church. On the other hand, a marriage between two individuals who have both been baptized in the Catholic Church is referred to as the "sacrament of marriage." In the event that an undesired situation occurs, such as a divorce, and the

interfaith couple is forced to become legally separated, the Catholic partner will be able to continue attending Mass and Eucharistic celebrations within the church after the divorce is finalized. If the individual has been granted a letter of dispensation, they are permitted to marry again and participate in the Eucharistic celebrations held in the church. Interfaith marriage is a social phenomenon. Zainun stated that interfaith marriage is highly possible and experienced by every individual of all religions, especially in a pluralistic life setting with diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, and so on (Kamal, 2007). Therefore, the discussion about marriage between individuals of different religions is a broad topic for discussion. Due to its broad scope, the researcher provided limits on the problem presented in this study, which is the view of the Catholic and Islamic religions regarding marriage between individuals of different faiths.

Based on the context of this study, the status questions serve as a reference and the primary topic of this research discussion: what is the primary foundation or pillar in the Catholic and Islamic religions that provides a perspective on interfaith marriage? How does the concept of interfaith marriage influence the moral development of children? The research plan for this study is as follows: It begins by discussing the concept of marriage from an Islamic perspective. Then it explains the Catholic perspective on marriage. It is followed by an examination of the implications of interfaith marriage on the moral education of children. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive discussion. Nevertheless, this study aims to provide an explanation of how interfaith marriage is viewed in Islam and Catholicism. The benefit of this study is expected to contribute to the literature or research system in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive research method as well as critical reading of texts. The researcher attempted to systematize findings from various sources, which then resulted in meaningful discussions. Since it involves analyzing various collections of literature found, it can also be called a literature review. Specifically, the literature review and critical reading of texts were conducted by reading and interpreting books, journals, and documents related to the research topic, either substantially or just as supplementary data, with discussions targeted to the chosen theme that is the focus of this research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## **The Concept of Marriage in Islam**

*According to the Quran*

Wibisana stated in his writing that in Islamic teachings, marriage is considered something very noble and sacred, as well as an act of worship to Allah, following the teachings of the Prophet or Sunnah Rasulullah, carried out with sincerity and full responsibility, and in accordance with the legal provisions that must be obeyed by all followers (Wibisana, 2016). Marriage in the Quran uses the term "Mitsaqon Gholidon," which means a firm covenant. Firstly, this term is used to refer to the covenant between Allah and His prophets or messengers as stated in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 7, which states: "*And (remember) when We took the covenant from the prophets and from you (yourself) from Noah, Abraham, Musa, and Isa son of Maryam, and We took from them a firm agreement.*" Hadiwardoyo, in his book "Marriage in Islam and Catholicism", states that this verse also refers to the covenant between Allah and the people of Israel. He emphasizes this by quoting Surah Al-Baqarah verse 83, which states:

*"And (remember) when we took a promise from the Children of Israel, "Do not worship other than Allah, and do good to your parents, your relatives, the orphans, and the poor. And speak good words to people, pray, and pay zakat." But then you turn away (deny), except for a small part of you, and you are still rebellious.*

Using the term mitsaqon gholidon for marriage aims to indicate the sanctity of the relationship between husband and wife, which is in line with the sanctity of the relationship between Allah and the chosen human beings. Therefore, marriage is also seen as a work of Allah, and children from a marriage are seen as a manifestation of Allah's extraordinary blessings to the husband and wife. The Quran also views marriage as a mutual agreement between men and women who are united in marriage. This is also emphasized in Surah An-Nisa verse 34, "*Men are leaders for women, because Allah exalted some of them (men) over others (women) and because they (men) have spent part of their wealth. Therefore, a pious woman is one who obeys Allah and takes care of herself behind her husband's back.* Verse 4 in the same surah also emphasizes that a wife has the right to receive a dowry at the time of marriage: "*And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they give it to you willingly, take it with satisfaction and ease.*"

The Quran emphasizes that Allah desires men and women to unite in marriage so that new human beings are born who continue the existence of mankind on earth. In Surah Ya-Sin, verse 36, it is emphasized that Allah created humans in pairs. Marriage becomes a

means for Allah when humans are created throughout time. Therefore, adherents of Islam are commanded to live in a family that has been united through marriage and is open to procreation or ready to give birth to new human beings. Even the birth of a child is considered very important, so infertility can be used as a reason for a husband to divorce his wife or marry another woman.

Marriage in Islam, viewed based on its foundation in the Quran, has a more personal reason and purpose, which is to obtain tranquility, love, and affection in the relationship between husband and wife. This is also emphasized in Surah Ar-Rum verse 21, *"And among the signs of His power is that He created for you wives of your own kind, so that you are inclined and feel at ease towards him, and made love and affection between you."* From this verse, it can be seen that the Quran emphasizes the importance of love and affection in an Islamic marriage bond.

The Quran presents how Allah desires that Muslims live in a monogamous marriage or one that lasts a lifetime. In addition to being monogamous, marriage should also be unbreakable. The problems that arise in the relationship between husband and wife in the household do not need to be a reason for divorce. Therefore, Allah gives a mandate to all Muslims in the Quran to try to resolve conflicts wisely. This is written in Surah An-Nisa verse 35:

*"If you are worried that there is a dispute between the two, then send a peacemaker from the male family and a peacemaker from the female family. If the two peacemakers intend to make repairs, surely Allah will give taufiq to the husband and wife. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing"*

Even though monogamy and inseparability are important in Islamic marriage, a man can marry more than one woman. However, this is only allowed in exceptional circumstances. The Quran affirms this in Surah An-Nisaa verse 3: *"And if you fear that you will not be able to do justice to orphaned women (if you marry them), then marry (other) women you like: two, three, or four. Then, if you fear that you will not be able to do justice, marry only one or all the slaves you have. That is not closer to not doing wrong."* Marriage is not merely a means of satisfying sexual needs, but more importantly, it can create peace in the lives of the husband and wife, allowing them to create heaven and earth in their marriage. This is the wisdom behind the institution of marriage in Islam. It is not only about finding happiness but also about opening up to the possibility of having children and preserving their lineage (hifdzu al-nasli) (Atabik & Mudhiyah, 2014)

*Hadits of Prophet Muhammad*

Ath Thabrani wrote that the Prophet Muhammad called marriage "half of faith." Marriage is highly recommended by Allah SWT, and in several verses of the Quran, it is referred to as an act of worship (Atabik & Mudhiiah, 2014). For the Prophet, marriage is not just a human affair but a reality that also concerns God. Ahmad recounts in his writing that the Prophet also prayed at a Muslim wedding ceremony, asking Allah to bless and unite the couple. Prophet Muhammad hoped that Muslim husbands and wives would be willing to have children and raise them to be righteous, so that in the end times, the Muslim community would become a great one (Basyir, 1980). Hadiwardoyo writes that Prophet Muhammad encouraged every Muslim to marry (Hadiwardoyo, 1990). Therefore, he did not agree with any Muslim who chose to remain single. The most fundamental reason, according to Atabik and Mudhiiah, is that for people who are ready to start a family, it is necessary to get married to prevent them from falling into adultery when their desires overwhelm those (Atabik & Mudhiiah, 2014). The emphasis on marriage that was required by Prophet Muhammad was based on the example of great prophets who were also married and had children from their marriages. Marriage is seen as one means of maintaining purity and keeping people away from the temptation to commit adultery. By quoting Bukhari's writing, Hadiwardoyo writes that the Prophet encouraged every young Muslim man to marry, but if they were not capable of doing so, they should resist the urge to fulfill their sexual needs (Hadiwardoyo, 1990).

Apart from its religious significance, Ahmad narrates that the Prophet Muhammad also emphasized the social meaning of marriage in Islam. Prophet Muhammad rejected marriages that were done secretly. Marriage should be conducted openly and in the presence of at least two male witnesses (Wibisana, 2016) and then announced to the public. Marriage done secretly is considered an invalid and sinful relationship (Basyir, 1980). Prophet Muhammad prohibited Muslim women from marrying multiple men. He also prohibited a Muslim man from proposing to a woman who had already been proposed to by another man. This was emphasized to avoid conflicts. The Prophet lived for 25 years with only one wife, Khadijah. Only after her death did he marry other women, and this was primarily done for social reasons.

Regarding the possibility of marrying multiple women due to exceptional circumstances, Prophet Muhammad explicitly limited the number of wives to four, and they must be treated fairly by their husbands. The Prophet also did not allow temporary marriage practices, except in cases such as the Battle of Authas, in which he permitted soldiers to temporarily marry women there in order to prevent them from engaging in prostitution. After

the war, the soldiers had to return to their original wives, and the temporary wives could be divorced. Based on the Quran, Prophet Muhammad emphasized that a husband should be a good leader and take responsibility, involving providing for his wife and children.

#### *Islamic Law*

Islamic Law emphasizes the teachings of the Quran and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad regarding marriage, as presented in the previous points. Marriage in Islam is considered a partnership for life, recognizing the intimate bond between husband and wife as well as any children or future generations that may arise. Marriage is recognized as a legal institution and is also regulated by law. This institution supports the lawful and legitimate sexual relationship and procreation of offspring. With this law, spouses find a new social status that is valued higher than before they were bound in marriage. Islamic law also emphasizes that marriage has many purposes, involving the happiness of the husband and wife, procreation or childbirth, the education of children, the fulfillment of sexual needs in a lawful way, unity in society, and the fulfillment of the personal aspirations of the Prophet Muhammad.

Legal experts also try to convince Muslims that monogamous marriage is more fulfilling than polygamous marriage. This argument is based on financial, psychological, and sociological perspectives. Monogamy ensures happiness and a peaceful family life. Nevertheless, Islamic law always leaves open the possibility for Muslim men to marry multiple wives if there are sufficient justifications for polygamy that are clear and acceptable to society (Cahyani, 2018). Men who have multiple wives must treat them fairly (Fata & Mustofa, 2013).

Islamic law also emphasizes that Islamic marriage should be considered permanent and not easily divorced. This is important for the well-being of their children and the well-being of all members of the family. Therefore, conflicts that arise within the family must be resolved in a peaceful and reconciliatory manner. However, Islamic law also allows for divorce to occur under certain circumstances. For example, if the wife is infertile, unable to fulfill the husband's sexual needs, has become mentally ill, is disobedient, commits adultery, or has other valid reasons.

#### **The Concept of Marriage in Catholicism**

Marriage is considered a sacred sacrament for Catholics. The marriage covenant, where a man and a woman form a lifelong partnership according to their natures, is planned for the well-being of the husband and wife and the birth and education of children. Through

Christ the Lord, the marriage of baptized persons is raised to the dignity of a sacrament. It is called a sacrament because it is a sign that shows the presence of Christ. Through the sacrament of marriage, Christ appears and gives His grace to the spouses to live their married lives. Therefore, they should live in love, just as Christ has loved and loved them. This is because God is love, and through that love, He made human beings based on His own image. He calls humans to become a reality because of His great love and His calling to love one another. Their love is manifested in mutual cooperation and is sanctified by the sacrament of Christ, in joy or sorrow, in body and soul, always faithful and inseparable, so that they may be free from adultery and divorce.

Mixed marriages between people of different religions in the Catholic Church are regulated in Canons 1124 and 1129. Through the foundation of Canon Law, mixed marriages of different religions have two meanings, namely, those regulated in Canon 1124 as *mixta religio* or marriages between different churches. This means that one partner is baptized in the Catholic Church and the other is baptized outside the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, Canon 1129 reaffirms what has been written in Canons 1127 and 1128, which are practiced in marriages affected by the obstacle of different religions referred to in Canon 1086 #1, which regulates marriages of "disparity of cult" or interfaith marriages. This *Mixta Religio* marriage is considered a prohibition of marriage and therefore requires prior permission from the local ordinary, in this case the bishop. On the other hand, the dissimilarity of cult marriages is considered an obstacle to marriage and requires a dispensation from the bishop to be valid. In order to carry out *Mixta Religio* and *Disparity of Cult* Marriages legally, several requirements established by the local ordinary must be met.

So what is the relationship between the sacrament of marriage and the education of children? The relationship is that by receiving the sacrament of marriage, husband and wife accept the task and responsibility of giving birth to and then educating their children. Therefore, the education of children becomes a goal, and marriage is in line with the goal of lifelong companionship between husband and wife.

In a Catholic marriage, it is believed that Jesus Christ himself is present. Jesus is present not only in the words of the sacrament of marriage but also in their entire lives. He is present in the entire history of the struggle of the husband and wife in living out their married life. Therefore, the husband and wife should strive to be witnesses of Christ by cultivating a life full of love and brotherhood with everyone. Through their love for each other, they are perfected as images and reflections of God.



In addition, in the Catholic Church, there are two essential characteristics of the sacrament of marriage: monogamy and indissolubility. Through the sacrament of marriage, Catholic couples receive a unique strengthening. Monogamy means that marriage is between one man and one woman, while indissolubility means that the marriage is lifelong and cannot be separated or terminated for any reason. Both of these characteristics are equally important and need to be taken seriously by every Catholic husband and wife in building a strong and lasting marriage.

### **Implications for Children's Moral Education**

#### *Children's Moral Education in Islam*

In Islamic teachings, marriage is one of the benefits through which humans (husband and wife) can obtain happiness, peace, and offspring. However, it becomes different when the marriage is performed with a partner of a different religion. Kaharuddin and Syafruddin wrote the following;

*On the contrary, it is not happiness and peace that are obtained. Likewise with children, what will the children be like in the future? What will their religion and beliefs be? This will become a big problem, and parents in particular will be held accountable by Allah SWT in the future. So, because of the magnitude of the evil that was caused, interfaith marriage was forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (Syafruddin & Pd, n.d., 2006).*

Therefore, children who are born should receive good and useful education or training so that all the good things in them and their aspirations can develop rapidly and they can grow into individuals with strong personalities and various beneficial abilities and skills. Thus, it is important for families and various institutions working in the field of education to play a role and be responsible for providing various appropriate stimuli and guidance so that a strong next generation can be created (Cahyadi, 2019).

As parents, husband and wife are given the right and obligation to raise the children that God has given them. Children should be protected. Parents have a duty to provide for, protect, and educate their children in an Islamic manner. Education is an important consideration for the child's future development. According to Ali Qaini, *education is to create various changes in various dimensions of human existence and behavior, with the aim of directing it toward a target that is important and determines one's destiny* (Al-ta & Al-ta, 2013). Education can have a tremendous impact on human civilization, which also determines human destiny. Kaharuddin and Syafruddin report in their writing that children of

parents of different religions will have two personalities, or dual personalities. On one hand, they must be able to face their Islamic father, for example, and on the other hand, they must be able to familiarize themselves with their mother's faith, such as Christianity (Syafuddin, 2006).

Moral is a benchmark for someone in assessing human behavior (Erni, E., & Asror, 2022). Nuryamin conducted a study in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province (DIY) as a research tool. The reason is that DIY is a melting pot or container for blending cultural identities. From the data, it was found that there is fluctuation in DIY. In 1980, there were at least 15 cases of interfaith marriages out of 1000 recorded marriages. In 1990, it increased to 18 cases and then decreased to only 12 cases in 2000. This downward trend is called an inverted U in statistics. In 1980, it was low (15/1000), then increased in 1990 (18/1000), and then decreased again in 2000. Surely, interfaith marriages will have implications for the education of children.

The implications for children's education are also influenced by three categories of interfaith marriages. First, both the husband and wife are weak in their respective religions. This reality will certainly directly affect the child's understanding of religion to the extent that their parents understand it. Generally, a child will follow their parents. Second, one spouse is stronger in their religious life than the other. One of the strong spouses will directly influence the child's education. One parent who is more devout in their religious life or who always shows their activity in educating their child by displaying things related to their religion will make the child tend to choose to follow their religion. However, it is possible that the side that gives in to educating the child will attract sympathy from the child and will want to explore religions other than the dominant religion taught by their parents. Third, both husband and wife are equally strong in their religious lives. Being equally strong in their religious life requires a fair and clear agreement, or even the child will be given the freedom to adhere to a certain religion. According to a study by Muhamad Murtadlo, a researcher from the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, interfaith marriages also have positive and negative impacts.

The positive impact or influence that arises is that children born to couples of different religions can learn tolerance. Religious differences should not be a source of problems. Certainly, families always want peace in the household, with the intention that existing differences do not become a source of conflict. In such situations, a tolerant attitude must be the main foundation of the relationship between spouses of different religions. Muhamad Murtadlo testified that religious differences in a household can lead to situations where

family members discuss the differences of each religion. As a result, children can understand the differences that exist within their family. The ability of children to behave and act is reflected in the development of moral and religious values. Islam has emphasized positive values that are useful in community life. This raises the need for the development of education related to moral and religious values. The analysis shows that in Islamic teachings, the process of developing moral and religious values in young children can be applied well and correctly.

The negative impact that arises in families of different religions can lead to hidden or subtle competition, where parents want their child to ultimately choose their religion. Muhamad said that this is the situation that leads to such hidden competition (Murtadlo, 1974).

#### *Moral Education for Children in Catholicism*

The choice to live together in a family comes with a responsibility for the family itself. In this regard, parents have a role in shaping and developing their children's mentality and guiding their moral education. Moral education for children is always related to attitudes, behaviors, and habits in doing something. Therefore, it is important for parents to educate their children on how to behave or act in a polite, commendable, and good manner. This moral education is an important part that should be prioritized above others. Parents, as the primary educators, have a great responsibility in educating their children. Children should be the main focus for parents so that they have rights and responsibilities.

The family is the first place humans get to know the world, through their parents. The position of the family as the first place for humans to give birth to a new generation, nurture, and educate children cannot be replaced by anything else. The function of the family includes creating a peaceful and calm atmosphere so that children can experience happiness. In such a situation, it can support efforts to nurture, educate, and develop children in accordance with their development, especially in the aspect of morality.

Actions that are in line with Christian morals and based on the teachings of Jesus Christ himself. This means that carrying out an action or obligation can be justified. Such actions that are guided by reason and free will are called moral actions (Suwito, 2002). Moral education is very important so that children do not fall into the moral issues that are prevalent today.

Parents have a responsibility to educate and nurture their children according to the teachings of the church. Therefore, parents must be an example or a role model for their

children. This example should be carried out with love, patience, dedication, selfless behavior, and sincere sacrifice to realize their love for their children. Because the characteristic of educators as parents is their love, which is fully manifested in the task of educating, as this task fulfills and perfects dedication to life.

Parents also have the right to educate their children. This right of parents is essential because it is related to the human way of life. This right is part of the parents' effort to express their love. Educating children is an important right in the family, as parents play an active role in developing God's creation. Parents have a fundamental role in educating children, as this right cannot be replaced by anyone else. The family is the first place for children to obtain education, including religious education, moral education, and sexuality education.

## **CONCLUSION**

Everyone cannot deny that in a marriage of different religions, whether it is Islam or Catholicism, a child is born out of the love of the husband and wife. In an Islamic or Catholic family, a child is first shaped, educated, and nurtured. Thus, parents assume the main responsibility for the moral education of their children because they learn about life from them. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the family becomes the first school. Children learn from their environment, and the first environment is usually the family. So it is not surprising that what children do is a reflection of their parents' upbringing. Through interaction with parents, children gain knowledge to develop themselves.

The education that starts at home cannot be replaced by any other place or institution. Through the family, children begin to know and understand this world with all its aspects. The education provided at school or other institutions cannot replace the education provided at home. At home, every family member can love, respect, be open, and help each other in an effort to create a harmonious, peaceful, and united family, even in a mixed-religion marriage. Therefore, the family becomes the real first place for children to live, grow, and develop.

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