

Negotiating Love and Faith: Interfaith Marriage in Manado, Indonesia

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Abstract: Interfaith marriages in people's lives have been practised in many areas in Indonesia, even if it's not legally registered. The rule of law in Indonesia does not accommodate interfaith marriages. When interfaith marriage occurs, the registration system should follow the marriage registration process, either at the KUA (office of religious affairs) for Muslims or at the Civil Registry office for other religions. This study aims to analyse the practice of interreligious marriage in Manado and how spouses of different religions maintain a good marital relationship. This research employs a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with 30 informants who practice interfaith marriage in Manado City. This research found that many people in Manado consider interfaith marriage permissible. They argue that religion is a relationship between humans and God, while marriage is related to human beings. The family of different religions based their relationship on the principle of "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (we are bound through kinship). Based on this principle, the family avoids using religious symbols in their communication that can cause tension and disrupt harmony among family members. The principle of *torang samua basudara* serves as the basis for good communication within the family. This study contributes to the literature and policy debate on interfaith marriage in Indonesia by providing grounded evidence of how local values and everyday communication practices function as a practical social mechanism for sustaining interreligious households, even within a legal context that offers limited formal recognition.

Keywords: Different religion; family; marriage; motive; religious symbol.

Abstrak: Pernikahan beda agama dalam kehidupan masyarakat sudah banyak ditemukan. Sekalipun tidak tercatat secara sah. Aturan hukum di Indonesia tidak menganut perkawinan beda agama. Sistem tersebut terintegrasi dengan pencatatan perkawinan baik di KUA ataupun di Catatan Sipil, langkah ini dilakukan karena pernikahan beda agama memberikan sebagian besar dampak yang tidak baik bagi masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis alasan masyarakat Kota Manado menikah dengan pasangan yang memiliki agama yang berbeda dan masih bisa hidup dengan baik dan dapat membina keluarga yang harmonis. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan pengambilan data melalui wawancara kepada 30 informasi untuk dijadikan sumber analisis pernikahan beda agama di Kota Manado. Hasil yang ditemukan bahwa penyebab yang membentuk keluarga beda agama karena adanya persepsi bahwa di masyarakat Manado tidak melarang membangun keluarga beda agama. Agama merupakan urusan antara hamba dan Tuhannya sedangkan perkawinan urusan antara sesama manusia. Dalam membentuk keluarga beda agama di Manado menerapkan pola komunikasi "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (Kita semua bersaudara), sehingga dalam berkomunikasi tidak membawa simbol-simbol keagamaan yang dapat mengganggu keharmonisan di antara para anggota keluarga. Prinsip *torang semua basudara* inilah yang menjadi landasan dalam menjalin komunikasi dalam keluarga. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur dan perdebatan kebijakan mengenai pernikahan antaragama di Indonesia dengan menyajikan bukti empiris yang kuat tentang bagaimana nilai-nilai lokal dan praktik

komunikasi sehari-hari berfungsi sebagai mekanisme sosial praktis untuk mempertahankan rumah tangga antaragama, bahkan dalam konteks hukum yang memberikan pengakuan formal yang terbatas.

Kata Kunci: Beda agama; keluarga; motif; pernikahan; simbol keagamaan.

1. Introduction

Interfaith marriages refer to marriages between spouses who adhere to different religions (Çiğdem, 2015). Interfaith marriages (families of different religions) are increasingly being discussed and are gaining momentum and relevance in society. The problem of interfaith marriages in people's lives has been discussed in academic seminars and in public discussions due to the increase in its practice in many regions in Indonesia, especially areas where society is very diverse. This practice has become a hotly debated topic, especially in relation to prohibitions by certain authorities, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which forbids interfaith marriages (Jauhari & Ghoni, 2020; Yusuf, 2013). The debate has also become controversial due to the rise of religious conservatism in Indonesia in recent years, leading its adherents to be more conservative and intolerant of other religions.

Interfaith marriage, in this article, refers to a marriage in which a prospective husband and wife belong to different religions. Before the marriage, the parties agreed not to raise their religious affiliations. This article uses the term "interfaith family" to imply a legal marriage recognised by law and religion.

North Sulawesi is the land of waving palm trees, symbolising the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. It is famous for its motto '*Torang Samua Basudara*,' which means 'We are all brothers/sisters.' It refers to the community bond through the kinship system. Manado is the capital city of North Sulawesi Province and has a population of 427,906 (2017). Manado society consists of various tribes, namely Minahasa, Bolaang Mongondow, Gorontalo, Sanger, Makassar, and Bugis. Manado residents are mostly migrants from various parts of Sulawesi; thus, no particular indigenous tribe lives in Manado. Manado is known as the city of a thousand churches, which indicates that most of the population is Christian. There are several Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian groups in this city. Manado is also known for its harmonious inter-religious relations. One of them is the interaction in the marital relationship where family members belong to different religions. The pattern of marital relations in Manado varies.

Marriage institutions in Indonesia are established under the Marriage Law no. 1 of 1974. Article 1 states that marriage is based on the people's belief in One God, which means any religious marriage is based on divinity. Further, article 2 explains that marriage is legal if it is carried out in accordance with the laws of each religion or belief, and that the marriage must be recorded in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. It can be interpreted that interreligious marriage should not be accommodated. It is assumed that interreligious marriage can cause uncertainty in the religious beliefs of the children.

For the couple whose both spouses are Muslim, the marriage should be registered in the office of Religious Affairs (KUA – Kantor Urusan Agama). Meanwhile, the registration should be lodged with the Civil Registry Service Office for couples who are not Muslims. The marriage should be registered at the Civil Registry Service Office for the couple who married with different religious affiliations.

Marriage patterns across different religions vary. Some marriages include a premarital agreement that each couple will remain in their own religion, or the couple agrees that one of them will follow the other's religion, with the groom following the bride or vice versa (Hutapea, 2011). Several cases also show that one of the partners would return to the couple's original religion after marriage. A harmonious marriage can be maintained through the commitment of both spouses. Some factors can influence the success or the failure of a marriage. Several of them are the relationships with the extended family, who interfere with household affairs in many cases. Managing a marriage to be successful is based on the commitment of both parties (Hutapea, 2011).

The concept of an interfaith family that decides to separate in matters of love and belief provides a solid foundation and commitment that is respected in building the family (Muhammad, 2020; Syatriadin, 2019). Humans, as social beings, do not limit their interactions to people from one religion; in fact, they interact with people from various backgrounds (Ruandini, 2011). When it comes to the relationship that leads to marriage, the community should respect the couples' decision to either remain in their own religion or for one of them to convert to the other's religion. In this case, people should maintain both the couple's love and their belief in the couple.

In North Sulawesi, families of different religions are common. North Sulawesi has a culture open to many religions, especially in Manado, a city of religious and ethnic diversity. The slogan of *Torang Samua Basudara* is a symbol of brotherhood for fellow believers and a practice in married life (Mantu, 2018). This paper explores the negotiations between love and faith in interreligious marriages. Love is an early relationship that has been framed with full responsibility. At the same time, belief is a guide to life, something religious adherents must account for to their God.

This article is a qualitative study that attempts to describe, analyse, and interpret the data collected during the research process. This article is exploratory, using a descriptive-analytical method, prioritising families of different religions in Manado City. This study aims to understand how people in Manado City maintain their families despite different religions and to examine the domestic lives of interfaith marriages. Interviews were conducted with 30 informants, including community leaders, religious leaders, KUA officers, Civil Registry officers in Manado City, and the main respondents who practice interfaith marriages. In addition to interviews with all informants, the authors conducted observations, documentation studies, and literature reviews, which were then analysed interactively and continuously in the field, comprising three activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

2. The Regulation of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia

Muslim jurists, except for a few 20th-century scholars, unanimously hold that Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. However, Muslim men may marry non-Muslim women of ahl al-kitāb, that is, Christians or Jews (Çiğdem, 2015). It is said that 'Marriage should be contracted between the people who share the same religion.' This statement is a misleading analogy because, for Çiğdem, a marriage is based on love, mutual respect, and understanding, and cannot be compared to other things like politics or economics, which do not involve love in their decisions.

Every marriage will have its ups and downs, but interfaith marriages face some extra challenges. For example, in Malaysia, research by Sintang et al. mentioned that there is a clear division of jurisdiction in family law between civil and sharia courts; non-Muslims can only marry Muslims after converting to Islam (Sintang, Khambali, Baharuddin, & Ahmad, 2014). According to this research, interfaith marriage can have a double-edged sword effect. It has several benefits but can also cause harm. Many believed that the harm (mafsadah) is greater than its benefit (maslahah), thus, Islam suggests not to practice this interreligious marriage (Islam, 2014). Besides, it is assumed that interreligious marriage will cause many problems and be impossible to create a *sakinah* (harmonious) family (Jalil, 2018). In Nigeria, interfaith marriages are only permitted for Muslim men and non-Muslim women (Imam, 2016). In the Mediterranean, individuals and groups adjust to a new and changing political and religious context as interreligious marriages occur in parallel, intertwining with religious conversions in complex ways (Sant-Cassia, 2018).

Different interpretations of Sharia Law (Islamic Law) exist in several countries regarding the possibility of adopting this practice within each country. In turn, these experiences can affect Muslims' attitudes regarding interfaith marriages (Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018). And this research by van Niekerk and Verkuyten (2018), conducted in 22 countries, reported that perceived religious similarity was associated with more positive attitudes.

However, the experience is quite different in Indonesia, as the regulations governing marriage do not allow interreligious marriage. It is stated in the Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974, article 2, paragraph (1) states: 'marriage is valid if the religious law and beliefs of each party carry it out. Islam is the majority religion in most parts of Indonesia. Several regions, however, have a majority of other religions like the Hindu majority in Bali Province, the Catholic majority in East Nusa Tenggara Province, the Christian majority in North Sulawesi, West Papua, and Papua Provinces, and other areas with equal proportions of Islam and Catholicism (Aini, Utomo, & McDonald, 2019).

Some Indonesian people who intend to practice interfaith marriages choose to conduct it in another country. It is because the regulations regarding interfaith marriage in Indonesia are unclear. In addition, most people who wish to have interfaith marriages find it difficult to register their marriage with the Civil Registry Service Office. The office cannot register interfaith marriages because there are no religions or practices that permit them.

Indonesia has regulations that regulate human rights, namely the rights inherent in human beings by nature, universal, and eternal. The regulations include the right to life and have a family, the right to develop oneself, the right to communicate, justice, independence, and security and welfare rights (Baso & Nurcholis, 2010). Human Rights, Marriage comes from the agreement of two parties. The United Nations Convention on Civil Rights Decisions states that there is no interference with people and their families in their choice of life partner.

Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974 does not recognise interfaith marriages. The law considers marriages valid only under the laws of the respective religions. In the teachings of Islam, the exegetes (mufassir) agree that marriage to non-Muslim women is allowed as long as the woman still adheres to the teachings of ahl al-Kitab, as stated in the Qur'an. However, when her belief deviated from it, it was forbidden to marry.

The prohibition of interfaith marriages has existed before Indonesia's independence. At that time, several regions in Indonesia adhered to indigenous religions, followed later by the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism. Marriages are carried out according to religious teachings and local customary rules. There is a tendency to prohibit or discourage marriage between parties of different religions or other groups (Abubakar, 2008).

Regarding interfaith marriages that occur in Indonesia, different opinions emerged between Muslims and Christians. The Islamic religious elites argue to obey the existing laws in Indonesia and that a person should deepen their religious understanding to avoid interfaith marriages. In contrast, the Christian religious elite responding to religious conversions caused by marriage is more open, as it falls within the individual's free choice regarding one's faith. When the marriage involves religious conversion, the couple should maintain the harmony of the marriage and remain committed to making it work (Jihaduddin, 2015).

Several religious groups impose restrictions on their members, prohibiting marriage to nonmembers of their faith (Kurttekin, 2020). In Indonesia, interfaith marriages are not supported by many regulations such as the Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage Chapter 1 Article 2 paragraph (1), the Compilation of Islamic Law Article 40 paragraph (c) and Article 44, the MUI Fatwa, and the Constitutional Court decision Number: 68/PUU-XII/2014, all of which banned interfaith marriages. Therefore, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) and the Civil Registry office will not carry out administrative records of interfaith marriages. Practising interfaith marriage is considered ignorant of the country's laws and regulations.

The prohibition on interfaith marriages and the difficulty in registering marriages caused several fundamental problems regarding citizens' rights. They, for example, have no marriage certificate indicating that they are a married couple. When the children born from this marriage could not get a birth certificate, this certificate is usually a requirement to apply for school. In June 2015, Indonesia's Constitutional Court rejected a petition for judicial review of the 1974 Marriage Law. The plaintiffs argued that the current interpretation of the law violated the right of interfaith couples to marry (Aini et al., 2019).

The laws in Indonesia regarding marriage show that it is difficult to have an interfaith marriage recorded officially. Following the fatwa of the Indonesian Ulama Council that banned interreligious marriage, the marriage registrars in each district are prohibited from recording the marriage involving non-Muslims (Patrickts, 2010).

The legal consequences of unregistered interfaith marriages will impact marital status, the status and position of children, and inheritance relationships (Zuriyati, Yaswirman, & Yasniwati, 2019). Since the validity of the marriage is the main requirement to protect and recognise the rights of children and wives, marriages between people of different religions that are not legalised nullify the rights of wives and children born from such marriages. Interfaith marriages undermine the inheritance rights of husbands and wives and their children. In addition to inheritance rights, interfaith families will also face problems in the dispute-resolution process in court, whether the religious court is authorised to adjudicate cases between Muslim parties or the state court is entitled to adjudicate cases involving non-Muslim parties. Dispute resolution is slow and convoluted.

Inherently, Indonesia prohibits interfaith marriage, which can be seen from several religions' various rules and statements. However, this does not condemn the Indonesian people for engaging in interfaith marriages in various forms (Judiasih, Asrimayasha, & Sudini, 2019). Merely, interfaith marriages carry heavy social responsibilities: the couple must be ready to be ostracised by society (Çiğdem, 2015).

3. Local Values of Manado: A Buttress for Interfaith Marriages

North Sulawesi is home to various tribes and ethnicities, with Minahasa being the most prominent. Bolaang Mongondow and Sangihe, directly adjacent to the Philippines, were previously part of the North Sulawesi region, which later split into its own independent province. In addition to various inland ethnicities, North Sulawesi also hosts outland ethnic groups such as Arab, Chinese, Javanese, Sumatran, and Kalimantan. Subcultures also existed on this island, such as the clans of Mamentu, Mamonto, Manopo, Makalunsenge, Paputungan, Karim, etc. The same is true for religious subcultures. For example, religious subcultures consist of Islam and Catholicism. Protestants, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and religious sects on the island of Sangihe are known as the Masaade community or old Islam. Within such religions, various sects exist, such as Sunni and Shiite in Islam.

Building trust across individuals and groups by increasing the intensity of encounters or meetings (*Bakudapa*) is a local wisdom in Sulawesi, especially in Manado. The people of Manado strengthen their social relationships through the habits of *basingga* (stopping by) and *bakudapa-bacarita* (meeting-telling) as integral parts of daily interactions. *Bakudapa-bacarita* is a sign of strengthening friendship and brotherhood.

Bakudapa can also mean dialogue in a general sense. In this case, *bakudapa* is the main prerequisite for building a dialogical and dynamic relationship. At the same time, *bakudapa* can be an excellent medium for managing disputes and preventing or minimising the possibility of other conflicts arising from different perspectives. In short, the *bakudapa* is an early rarity for the *bakubae* (peace). Meanwhile, *bakubae* are an ideal solution for reconciliation and rehabilitation. In this perspective, the *bakudapa* process carried out by Muslims and Christians in the tradition of the feast of the valve is one of the fundamental aspects of a culturally-based, in-depth dialogue process for conflict resolution.

The *bakudapa* habit is a daily activity for the people of Manado. In *bakudapa*, there is a process of listening to one another, respecting each other's positions, and understanding one another. Suppose some conditions require forgiveness, then through *bakudapa* and the internalisation process, among others. In that case, forgiveness is given to foster genuine acceptance of one another. This condition is the foundation of the *bakubae*.

In a multicultural society, contact between people of different identities or *bakudapa* is a sociological consequence. This contact even manifested in marriage bonds between Minahasa people and Bolaang Mongondow, Sangihe, and Gorontalo people, Arabs and Javanese, and even in inter-religious marriages, especially between Muslims and Christians, such as the *Bakukaweng*.

The people of North Sulawesi are used to differences, taking care of one another, and respecting one another as a daily reality in inter-religious interactions. When many Muslims in other regions in Indonesia call out against giving greetings or wishing a merry Christmas to the Christians, Muslims in North Sulawesi spread the banners in many corners of the city, saying Merry Christmas from the Muslim community. Everyone does not hesitate to mention that they have relatives or parents of different religions and, in fact, strengthen their relationships with other religions in North Sulawesi.

Bhineka Tunggal Ika means unity in diversity and represents Indonesia as a nation with multi-ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and religions. Indonesian society is pluralistic, especially in terms of ethnicity and religion. Indonesians, in living their lives, face fundamental differences in various ways. Thus, interreligious marriage cannot be avoided, and the government should address this practice by providing a solution through regulation.

The pattern of interfaith communication in Manado does not emphasise the religious aspect, because religion falls within the individual responsibility towards God. In Manado, the principle of *torang samua basudara, torang samua ciptaan Tuhan* (we are bound through kinship, and we are all God's creation) is the basis for relationships. Thus, the emphasis on relationships that are promoted in Manado is based on the kinship system (Stanley, Personal Communication, July 26, 2018). Deny Pinontoan also mentions that interfaith marriages still occur until now, and sociologically, it is unproblematic. Since the beginning of contact between the native and the immigrant in North Sulawesi, interfaith marriages have already occurred (Deny Pinontoan, Personal Communication, July 29, 2018).

4. The Practice of Interfaith Marriage: Managing Love, Respect, and Tolerance

In Indonesia, marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims used to be easy and quite common, especially in Central Java and Yogyakarta. Local registrars often find ways to accommodate dual religious couples seeking to marry (Jones, Leng, & Mohamad, 2009). The data obtained by Aini in Jakarta shows that 3,447 interfaith married couples (an average of 138 cases per year) registered their marriages at the Civil Registry Office between 1975 and 1999. In 1980, at least 1.5% of married couples in Yogyakarta were interreligious. That figure increased to 1.8% in 1990 (Aini, 2008). Among non-Muslims, this figure is much higher, around 5% in 1980, 1990, and 2000 (Aini et al., 2019).

Apart from Java, North Sulawesi, especially Manado, also had several cases of inter-religious marriages. This article presents the stories of interreligious marriages experienced by participants in this study—for example, the marriage of Toar Palilingan, a Christian, to his Muslim wife. The marriage, which took place in 1982, lasted and was harmonious until 2010, when his wife passed away. At the beginning of their marriage, they did not receive the family's approval from Toar's wife's family, who are Muslim (Toar Palilingan, Personal Communication, July 25, 2018). However, as time goes by, the family can accept it, so they decide to marry according to their respective religions. The first marriage is based on Christianity, and then carried out based on Islam, without baptising the bride and groom.

After marriage, they are compiling their marriage records to be recorded with the District Court and registered with the Civil Registration Service. During their marriage, opposition came from friends and relatives of both sides. Many of them suggested to each spouse, Toar and his wife, that both invite each other to convert to the same religion. However, Toar and his wife believe that all the faiths they profess are true and that there is no need to force someone, especially a loved one, to convert. Toar and his wife remain adamant about maintaining the harmony of their marriage through tolerance and by defending each other's religions.

From this marriage, Toar Palilingan and his wife have a son. Neither of them forces their son to follow one of their religion, but instead, leaves it to their son's choice. The son, instead, chooses Jew as his religion. Toar did not question his son's choice of religion as long as his son was a good adherent. Toar builds religious harmony within his family through mutual tolerance, understanding, and awareness, and does not force family members to follow one religion. He said:

My family upholds religious freedom. I give my wife and children the freedom to worship. On every religious celebration day, such as Eid al-Fitr, their families visit each other. During the month of Ramadan, I respect my wife who is fasting. I believe that everyone's freedom to practice their

religion and freedom of religion will foster a tolerant attitude in religious life. This kind of attitude will never be present in the people who do not respect their beliefs (Toar Palilingan, Personal Communication, July 25, 2018).

The principle of interfaith marriage practised by Toar prioritises the meeting point between religious goals and religious teachings. He believes that all religions share the same principles, namely educating people to behave appropriately and correctly based on the substance and essence of their respective religions. All religions teach universal values, such as compassion, peace, respect, mutual help, justice, etc.

Endang Kadir experiences another example of a successful interreligious marriage. Endang, a Muslim, married a Christian husband. They met for a short period but immediately decided to get married. Endang's family did not oppose her marriage.

We have been married for 17 years. At first, my husband's family opposed our marriage, but in the end, they agreed. Before we married, we do not have a long courtship, but we directly got married. Now, my husband converted to Islam" (Endang Kadir, Personal Communication, July 22, 2018).

Endang and her husband can manage their marriage well. There were no problems related to their belief. They still have no child yet. Endang said that the most important aspect in maintaining a family with different religions is respecting and appreciating one another.

There should be no coercion, we should respond maturely to our differences. When we manage to be tolerant in the family, we can do it in the society in general" (Endang Kadir, Personal Communication, July 22, 2018).

The principle Endang follows in entering interfaith marriages is to promote an open-minded attitude and tolerance. The existence of religious plurality is the destiny and will of God Almighty. Islamic teachings teach us to be generous and tolerant of religious diversity. Endang's tolerant and open attitude made her marriage last. Even her husband, who was previously non-Muslim, later chose to take the *shahada* and embrace Islam.

Other cases of interfaith marriages are experienced in Valentin's marriage. Valentin converted to Islam amid the challenges her family faced. After marriage, she returned to Christianity because she felt unguided. However, she manages the marriage well. Her husband supported her with her religious activities. Whenever she needs to attend church, he will drop her off there. They also help each other prepare religious celebrations for each partner (Valentin, Personal Communication, April 20, 2018). This harmonious interreligious marriage also happens in Ida's family (a pseudonym). Ida is married to her husband, who is a Christian and active in his church. Meanwhile, she is also active in mosque activities. They help each other organise religious festivals and do community service (Ida, Personal Communication, June 27, 2018).

These interreligious marriages presented in this study share the same principle in managing their harmonious marriages: tolerance and mutual respect for the beliefs of their respective partners. By implementing the principle of tolerance, interfaith marriages can be maintained well.

Interfaith marriages in North Sulawesi did not always run smoothly. This study also found that several cases failed. The main factor was unpreparedness to deal with differences between partners, even though the trigger was not solely religious. Still, other factors made interfaith marriages untenable, for example, economic factors, different cultures, and the emergence of awareness on the legal status of marriage that is not recognised by the state.

It was experienced by one of the informants, Mimin Parera. Mimin married quite young, about 19 years old. She is a devout Muslim and from a religiously fanatical family background. She married a Protestant. To receive approval from Mimin's parents, her prospective husband pretended' to be a Muslim. However, during the marriage, they experienced conflict, especially regarding the legal status of their marriage (Mimin Parera, Personal Communication, March 6, 2018). Several failed interreligious marriages are caused by one spouse converting to the other's religion. However, when a marriage does

not work out, one returns to the religion of origin, as experienced by Rivai Madabi (Rivai Madabi, Personal Communication, March 20, 2018).

Maryam Patutungan also experienced the failure of an interreligious marriage. When she and her husband decided to get married, they agreed to keep their religion. However, later in their marriage, he forced her to convert to her husband's religion, Christianity, because of her husband's ego. Maryam refused it and asked for a divorce instead (Maryam Papatungan, Personal Communication, February 14, 2018).

From the examples of interfaith marriages above, it can be seen that some successful marriages foster a democratic, tolerant communication pattern within the family. It can be proven by the existence of communication between husband and wife in determining the religion of their children, providing the widest possible opportunity for their partners to practice their religious beliefs, even taking them to places of worship and helping them prepare for each religious celebration.

Due to the difficulty in gaining the legal status of interreligious marriage, several couples converted to one of the spouses' religions either for real or pretended. The pattern of interreligious marriage as experienced by the informants above and also by several other respondents are 1) each partner maintains their original religion (*baku tahang agama*) (Abdurrahman Konoras, Personal communication, June 10, 2018), 2) lives with one religion (Nasruddin Yusuf, Personal Communication, May 25, 2018), 3) wives follow their husbands for reasons of children stability, 4) When each of the spouses could not respect one religion divorce took place (Subardi Moodut, Personal Communication, October 27, 2018).

Several aspects should be considered in interreligious marriage: first, maintain a spirit of tolerance and respect, help each other, and even remind each other of the teachings of each other's religions. Second, never force one religion on family members, including the partner and children. Third, strengthen each other's beliefs and support each other in practising religion.

The pluralistic condition of North Sulawesi prepares the community to face differences. The awareness of diversity in the community also helps them maintain social activities. Several problems may also occur, especially those related to politics and economics, as well as hot national issues such as the Ahok case. However, people in North Sulawesi can maintain and reduce conflict through their kinship-based bonds. This kinship system strengthens bonds among people in North Sulawesi. Apart from interreligious marriage, they also practice interethnic marriage. Thus, this article argues that, at the communal level, this interreligious marriage is legal. However, the consequences of this practice may include losing their constitutional rights, as required by the requirement of a valid marriage.

5. *'Torang Samua Basudara': The Principle in an interfaith marriage in Manado*

The term *torang samua basudara* is the motto of the people of North Sulawesi, who live to maintain the harmony and peace of the region (Rajafi, 2016). A harmonious family life among members of different religions can be maintained. The basic principle is love and compassion among the family members (Parker, Hoon, & Raihani, 2018). Kalesaran and his son experienced this kind of life, where he is a Christian while his son is Muslim. They live happily without any significant problems related to the different religions (Kalesaran, Personal Communication, June 20, 2018).

Çiğdem (2015) also reported that:

To the rest, I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce her. Because an unbelieving husband is purified through his wife, and an unbelieving wife is purified through her husband.

This opinion aligns with the principle of life in North Sulawesi, *torang samua basudara*, which means they are all brothers/sisters and no one should hurt each other. The conflict can be prevented if everyone respects each other, including in matters of religion.

Regarding the legal uncertainty of interfaith marriage in Indonesia, research by Suhasti, Djazimah, and Mada (2018) shows that interfaith marriages conducted under the provisions of the State court are

considered valid as long as the marriage follows the rituals/rules of one of the spouses' religious beliefs. Regarding marriage registration for legal events or actions affecting the community, as stated by the Department of Civil Registry Affairs, there has been no synchronisation with the marriage law that would affect the non-contradiction in forming the legal structure. When a marriage is based on the provisions of the District Court but does not follow the rituals or rules of a particular religious belief, it implies not only a tendency to 'smuggle' the law by the people but also to disputes among the judges when making decisions related to judicial reasons.

In addressing the legal uncertainty regarding interfaith marriage, one example is the case of Vony and Andrianus, in which the Supreme Court permitted them to practice interfaith marriage. The Supreme Court's resolution in accepting interfaith marriages based on the general principles enshrined in the constitution is sufficient evidence for the regulation and laws on interfaith marriage, including Islamic law, to reconsider their decisions that accommodate interfaith marriage in Indonesia (Lukito, 2008).

6. Conclusion

Marriage is an important life stage in the Indonesian community. The diversity of Indonesian cultures, ethnicities, and religions enables people to interact with one another. In the process of socialising, meeting people from different cultural and religious backgrounds is unavoidable, including the development of love feelings. In Manado, for example, as this article shows, interfaith marriage is common, and the community accepts it. North Sulawesi, a region with diverse ethnicities and religions, binds its communities through the principle of *torang semua basudara*. This principle bound the community to respect people based on the kinship system, not religion. Thus, several interfaith marriages successfully maintain harmony by respecting and tolerating each other's beliefs. Interfaith marriage will always occur in Indonesia as part of a multireligious belief. In this regard, Indonesian marriage law should accommodate this interfaith marriage. However, today's law on interfaith marriage is still uncertain, making several people lose their constitutional rights. In this regard, Indonesian marriage law should be reviewed to accommodate this interfaith marriage.

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Conflict of Interest: This paper results from research carried out directly by the researcher and is not plagiarism, duplicate, or imitation of the results of other people's research, except in certain parts where the source is mentioned, so that this research can be accounted for.

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