

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN INTERFAITH FAMILY

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### ABSTRACT

*The phenomenon of religious education for children born and raised in families with parents of different religions, Muslim and non-Muslim, is interesting to study. This field of qualitative research uses a phenomenological approach, aiming to describe the interaction of religion in interfaith families in the context of religious education in the family. Data collection took place from January to March 2023 for participants consisting of 10 families of different religions in Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, Central Java Province. The results of the study show that there are three types of religious interaction in interfaith families. First, parents introduce all their religions to their children. Second, parents teach one religion to their children. Third, parents' direct religion for their children based on division.*

## INTRODUCTION

In family education, parents have a very important role in educating their children, especially in religious education. The family is the children's foundation and initial educational institution (Darajat, 2002; Ibda & Wijayanti 2017) to process to become a person with a balance of the qualities of three aspects, namely physical, spiritual, and intellectual (Vermeer 2014; Chadijah, 2018: 113; Ibda 2023). Parents are responsible for instilling faith, ethics, and character education in children in the family (Khofifah and Mahsun, 2022). This is because education is the main and most important pioneer in children's education before going to the next level.

In Indonesia, in terms of married couples of different religions, interfaith families are at least divided into two descriptions, namely couples who marry with different religions (interfaith marriages) and couples who marry in one religion. Then one of the partners returns to their original religion. Referring to data from the Indonesia Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), it was recorded that starting in 2005, there had been 1,146 cases of interfaith marriage (Muhammad, 2020). The reality of interfaith families, whether caused by interfaith marriage factors or by the return of a husband and wife to their original religion, creates problems both in law (Yunus and Aini, 2018), religion, culture, society, and of course, education and religion. This phenomenon can be found in Temanggung Regency, Central Java. The area known as religious heterogeneity has one area known as the center of converts, namely Kaloran District (Ibda 2018). In the span of 5 years, from 2017 to 2020, 121 converts were recorded (Fahrudin, 2020). According to the Mualaf House of the Temanggung Regency Ulama Council ((in Indonesia: Rumah Mualaf Majelis Ulama Indonesia Temanggung), the majority of converts to Islam in Kaloran District are caused by marriage, and there are several facts that one of the couples returned to their original religion afterward. This is one of

the factors causing the emergence of different religious families in Kaloran District, namely husband and wife, one of whom is Muslim and the other is non-Muslim.

The phenomenon of interfaith families in Kaloran District is interesting for two reasons. First, based on the initial observations that have been made, it is known that Islamic religious leaders hold the fiqh understanding that marriage must be of the same religion: Islam and Islam (Muslim and Muslim women). Theoretically, the fiqh of families of different religions in Kaloran does not get legality. Second, on a different side, sociologically, a family with a husband and wife of different religions is still recognized in society. Even though, in theory, it contradicts fiqh, socially, it still gets the affirmation of society without the slightest difference.

There have been several studies with a focus on interfaith families that have been done before. For example, Rosdiana dan Bahtiar (2020) examine the factors that determine the choice of religion for a child from a husband and wife who have different religions. In Kudus, Central Java. Research on the ongoing process of religious education in interfaith families in England with a focus on Turkish immigrant families was conducted by Kurttekin (2020). Similar research was also conducted by Prahara (2016) with locations in Ponorogo, East Java. Pajarianto dan Mahmud (2019) examined the practice of religious education in multi-religious families in Tana Toraja. In Jepara, Central Java, Saefudin dan Widyawati (2019) compared the parenting styles of children in families of the same religion and different religions. Loretha, Nurhalim, and Utsman (2017) and Warsiah (2018) examined religious education in families in minority Muslim areas.

Based on the explanation above, the distinction and question of this research is how is the interaction of religion between parents of different religions with their children in the context of religious education for children in the family. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of religious education formulas for children in different religious families according to the perspective of Islamic education.

## METHODS

### Types of Research

This field of qualitative research uses a phenomenological approach Creswell (2021) explains that this qualitative research is a process of exploring and understanding the meaning of the relation between participant (human) behavior and a social-historical perspective (place and time). The goal is constructing phenomena (Sugiyono, 2019; Hamzah, 2021). The scope of this research is a family of different religions with a husband and wife where; one is Muslim, and the other is non-Muslim and has children. The research location is in Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, Central Java Province, from January to March 2023.

### Data Source

There are two data sources in this study, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources (Sugiyono, 2019)

1. Primary data sources are data sources that directly provide data to researchers as data collection instruments. The primary data source is a married couple with different religions and children, who at first were married according to Islam. However, after that, one of the couples returned to their original religion and still bound themselves in family ties as husband and wife.
2. Secondary data sources do not directly provide data originating from the social environment in the form of religious leaders and Children's Learning House (in Indonesian: *Rumah Belajar Anak / RBA*) activists at the research location.

### Data Collection Technique

Referring to Sugiyono (2019), data collection techniques in this study were in the form of interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with families of different religions, religious leaders, and RBA activists. Observations are made of the behavior and events of the data source. The

data extracted is all related to the interaction of religion in interfaith families from the perspective of religious education for children.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis uses the stages presented by Sugiyono (2019). All data collected is then reduced, presented, concluded, and verified. The data collected is sorted between those related directly and indirectly. This reduction step is continued by presenting data based on categories that can answer research questions. The next step is to draw up a verified conclusion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULTS**

Ten interfaith families are spread across three hamlet areas in one village in Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, with the following criteria:

1. Married according to Islam and officially registered at the Office of Religious Affairs (in Indonesian: *Kantor Urusan Agama / KUA*) Kaloran District
2. After marriage, one of the partners returns to their original religion and remains together as a normal family
3. Have children
4. Obtain environmental recognition as a whole and normal family by obtaining social rights such as families of the same religion.

The illustration of the ten families above is described as follows. First Family: non-Muslim husband, Muslim wife, Muslim first child, non-Muslim second child. Second Family: Muslim husband, non-Muslim wife, non-Muslim children. Third Family: The husband is Muslim, the wife is non-Muslim, the first child is non-Muslim, and the second child still follows both parents' religions. Fourth Family: Muslim husband, non-Muslim wife, non-Muslim first child, non-Muslim second child, non-Muslim third child. Fifth Family: The husband is non-Muslim, the wife is Muslim, the first child is Muslim, and the second is non-Muslim. Sixth Family: The husband is Muslim, the wife is non-Muslim, the first child is Muslim, and the second is non-Muslim. Seventh Family: non-Muslim husband, Muslim wife, and children follow the rituals of both parents' religions. Eighth Family: non-Muslim husband, Muslim wife, non-Muslim first child, Muslim second child. Ninth Family: non-Muslim husband, Muslim wife, and children follow the rituals of both parents' religions. Tenth Family: Muslim husband, non-Muslim wife, Muslim child.

The First to Seventh Families are domiciled in the First Hamlet. The Eighth and Ninth families live in the Second Hamlet. The Tenth Family is domiciled in the Third Hamlet. The three hamlets have similarities in the tradition of cooperation between residents. This cooperation is not only for social needs but also for religious holidays. Muslim residents help cook on other religious holidays and vice versa. Furthermore, from the results of the data analysis, it is known that the following things:

### **Perceptions of Religion**

For participants (husband and wife of different religions), religion is interpreted as one of the individual identities in social interaction in the category of a label worn by a person and written in the population's identity. No meaning was found in the sacredness of religion, so religious conversions became an ordinary event and did not affect one's spiritual aspects. Religion is perceived as a social identity without carrying sacred implications.

This resulted in the birth of the event of converting religion back to the original religion after the wedding event. Thus, this cannot be separated from the reason for the previous conversion as a condition for being able to get married must be one religion. So, one of the non-Muslim couples then converted to Islam before the marriage was carried out. This kind of religious perception is formed by the family's perspective and the environment in which one grows and develops religion. It is known that the husband and wife (participants) were born and raised in a family that views religion not as

something fundamental and gains an introduction to religion simply as a social identity. Religion is not studied as a system and teachings that become a way of life.

Other influences also come from the context of space and time (location). The location where the participant is domiciled is known as an area with diverse religions, with places of worship that are side by side, and have a tradition of helping each other regardless of religious basis. This inter-religious cooperation is not only in social spaces; it even penetrates social-religious spaces such as participating in preparing for holy day celebrations.

In addition, at the research location, it was also found that the implementation of hereditary traditions was still strong, which better reflected the ancestral culture, such as jamasan pusaka (the tradition of cleaning heirlooms), ruwatan bumi (the tradition of expressing gratitude for the produce obtained from the earth), and sadranan (a series of ceremonies performed by Javanese people to clean the grave and pray to God). Interestingly, this tradition is carried out by all citizens across religions.

Interfaith meetings were also found in activities that focused on involving children, namely the implementation of subject tutoring. Certain religions organize these educational activities outside of school hours in places of worship of certain religions by involving children of different religions as tutoring participants. At this point, children become familiar with the religious symbols of other religions. There was even a procedure for praying when starting and ending activities using the general phrase "O God" (in Indonesian: Ya Allah) and movements that did not refer to a particular religion.

### **Selection and Religious Education of Children**

Even though religion is not perceived as a way of life-related to the choice of religion for children, each party (husband and wife) wants the child to follow the religion they embrace. The strongest reason is the festive atmosphere in the house when carrying out religious holidays. If there are family members of the same religion, it will enliven the atmosphere of the intended celebration. The choice of religion adopted by children can be divided into three types: (1) Parents fully surrender to children; most religious children become definitive in adolescence, (2) Parents choose their child's religion from childhood based on an agreement between husband and wife, and (3) In several cases, the child takes turns following the father and mother to the house of worship.

However, there is no open conflict or divorce due to this kind of interaction process. In the choice of the third category of religion, the child's decision to choose a religion is influenced by the party that has the most consistent and strong influence on the child to follow the religion he wants. Religious education in the family for children needs to be done specifically. Children are invited to places of worship along with religious activities, frequently following the rhythm of their parents and based on the religion chosen for the child. The values emphasized in the family are the universal values of all religions, such as ethics, kindness, honesty, and mutual help.

Furthermore, the good religious quality of children seen from the practice of worship, participation in religious learning places for children, and attendance at places of worship are much lower when compared to children from families whose parents share the same religion. There is no emphasis on practicing common worship and study at places of religious learning for children. The existence of interfaith families receives affirmation from the community where they live. The community is permissive and considers religious differences, even though they originally married within the same religion (Islam), as not a social problem nor a religious issue. Specifically, from this religious perspective, it remains socially valid for society, and when it comes to the legality of fiqh, it becomes an individual issue with God.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Religious Conversion**

Changes in religion are determined by several reasons, such as the truth of scientific findings, being carried away by friendship, because of marriage, factors of economic necessity, repression from certain parties, and God's guidance (Lahmuddin Lubis and Asry, 2021: 21-25). Specifically looking

at religious conversion by marriage, according to Warsiah (2018), society tends to be permissive because they believe that religion is the prerogative of every human being.

The phenomenon of interfaith marriages is usually based on a lack of understanding of religion and low motivation to practice religious teachings. One's religious behavior strongly influences the decision to carry out interfaith marriages (Ibda 2014). Religious behavior is not born suddenly but results from family and environmental habits (Ramayulis, 2009). As described by Warsiah (2018), religious behavior has various causes, including environmental traditions, the need for security and comfort, inner experience, academic ability, and self-existence.

### **The Family as an Educational Institution**

Referring to Amri and Tulab (2018) and Aziz (2015), the family is a group of people who interact under one auspice by being bound and marked by marriage, reproduction, and economic endeavors. Djaelani (2013) mentions that there are four functions of the family: (1) maintaining the child's nature; (2) exploring and developing children's potential; (3) providing a conducive environment; and (4) transmitting the values, customs, traditions, culture, and norms that are believed. Sociologically, Mahrus dkk. (2021: 14-16), mentions ten family functions, namely biological, educational, religious, protective, socialization, recreational and economic.

Wahy (2012) states that the family functions as an educational institution. Some experts even conclude that the family is the first and main institution that introduces religion to children (Petts, 2014; Siroj et. al., 2019; Wahy, 2012 Darajat, 2002; Mizal, 2014). Children born directly interact and get their first teaching from their parents, where the two are united in an institution (Wahy, 2012). From the perspective of family education, parents have a role as educators and children as learners (Hadisubroto 1994). According to Warsiah (2018), the role of parents as teachers can be seen in the process of nurturing, guiding, setting an example, and teaching. The education process for children in the family takes place all the time.

### **Religious Interaction in the Family**

According to Djaelani (2013), religion as a social reality has functions: educative, savior, peace, social control, solidarity, renewal, and sublimation. In particular, the educational function can be seen in religious teachings through orders, invitations, prohibitions, and good and wrong instructions. Vermeer (2014) stated that in a family, parents are the key actors in instilling religion in children. The methods used are in the form of teaching, orders, advice, prohibitions, punishments, gifts, habituation, exemplary, supervision, training, and parenting (King and R.A Mueller, 2003; Agus Setiakawan, 2016; Schwartz, 2006; Loretha et al., 2017; Warsiah, 2018; Najam and Batool, 2016). A child learns directly from how his parents treat him (Lahmuddin Lubis and Asry, 2021: 34).

According to Muhammad Daud Ali (2004), there are three religious education materials in the family: faith, worship, and morals. Whereas Halim in Warsiah (2018: 9) elaborates even more, namely faith, rituals (worship), health, social, and economics. The interaction between parents and children can be categorized into parenting. Saefudin dan Widyawati (2019) explain parenting is a set of ways that parents practice in raising, directing and teaching their children. Furthermore, referring to Chadijah (2018), parenting in the family is divided into 3: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic. Coercion by parents characterizes the authoritarian parenting style. Permissive parenting is characterized by giving freedom to children. Democratic parenting is a combination of authoritarian and permissive.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a child gets first and foremost religious education from within his family, including interfaith families. The research results show that the pattern of religious interaction in families of different religions in Kaloran District, Temanggung Regency, can be grouped into permissive, authoritarian, and democratic. Religious education in different families takes the form of inculcating universal values of all religions, such as ethics,

kindness, honesty, and helping each other. Future research must explore religious education in interfaith families with new perspectives according to the times.

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