

## Religious Expression of Young Muslim Women's Identity amid Diversity in Bali

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**Abstract:** Religious expression among minority groups often unfolds within complex negotiations between identity, social acceptance, and cultural diversity. This study explores the dynamics of religious expression among young Muslim women in Bali within the context of sociocultural diversity and the challenges of being a minority. Bali, as a global tourism destination, has a history of Muslim communities dating back to the 14th century coexisting with the Hindu majority. The research employs a descriptive-qualitative method, utilizing participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. Primary data were collected from young Muslim women, community leaders, and Islamic youth organizations in Bali. The results reveal that young Muslim women face significant challenges, including religious discrimination, social pressure in expressing their faith, limited access to religious education, difficulties in obtaining halal food, and religious conversion due to marital pressures. On the other hand, they utilize social media as a new space to express their religious identities. In interfaith interactions, young Muslim women demonstrate adaptability to local norms while facing tensions between religious identity and social demands. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on the relationship between identity, religious minorities, and religious expression in multicultural contexts such as Bali.

**Keywords:** Bali; diversity; religious expression; young Muslim

**Abstrak:** Ekspresi keagamaan di kalangan kelompok minoritas seringkali terjadi dalam negosiasi yang kompleks antara identitas, penerimaan sosial, dan keragaman budaya. Studi ini mengeksplorasi dinamika ekspresi keagamaan di kalangan perempuan Muslim muda di Bali dalam konteks keragaman sosio-budaya dan tantangan menjadi minoritas. Bali, sebagai destinasi wisata global, memiliki sejarah komunitas Muslim yang telah ada sejak abad ke-14 dan hidup berdampingan dengan mayoritas Hindu. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif-kualitatif, dengan memanfaatkan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, diskusi kelompok terfokus (FGD), dan analisis dokumen. Data primer dikumpulkan dari perempuan Muslim muda, pemimpin komunitas, dan organisasi pemuda Islam di Bali. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan Muslim muda menghadapi tantangan signifikan, termasuk diskriminasi agama, tekanan sosial dalam mengekspresikan keyakinan mereka, akses terbatas terhadap pendidikan agama, kesulitan

mendapatkan makanan halal, dan konversi agama akibat tekanan pernikahan. Di sisi lain, mereka memanfaatkan media sosial sebagai ruang baru untuk mengekspresikan identitas agama mereka. Dalam interaksi antaragama, perempuan Muslim muda menunjukkan kemampuan beradaptasi dengan norma lokal sambil menghadapi ketegangan antara identitas agama dan tuntutan sosial. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperkaya diskursus tentang hubungan antara identitas, minoritas agama, dan ekspresi agama dalam konteks multikultural seperti Bali.

**Kata Kunci:** Bali; keragaman; ekspresi keagamaan; pemuda Muslim

## A. Introduction

The issue of wearing the hijab in Bali has occasionally surfaced as a source of tension, particularly in educational institutions and professional settings. Although academic literature rarely places explicit emphasis on discriminatory practices against Muslim women, empirical incidents and public controversies indicate that such discrimination is present and socially experienced. For example, in 2014, the prohibition of the hijab at SMAN 2 Denpasar became a widely discussed controversy. The issue was covered in both local and national media outlets, including *Republika*,<sup>1</sup> and became the subject of two undergraduate theses by Afrianti<sup>2</sup> and Septiana.<sup>3</sup> This prohibition illustrates how religious expression among Muslim women can be institutionally regulated and constrained, particularly within local public institutions. This prohibition was one of several challenges faced by young Muslim women in Bali when wearing religious symbols.

Beyond educational spaces, discrimination has also emerged in professional and public-facing environments. More recently, a video circulated featuring a Bali senator making remarks that were considered demeaning to the hijab. The senator criticized the presence of Muslim women wearing hijabs in frontline positions, stating that he preferred women in such roles to leave

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Baraas, "Larangan Jilbab, SMAN 2 Denpasar Berlindung dengan Aturan Sekolah," *Republika*, January 6, 2024, <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/myz8y6/larangan-jilbab-sman-2-denpasar-berlindung-dengan-aturan-sekolah>.

<sup>2</sup> Nila Afiatul Afrianti, "Analisis Wacana Pemberitaan Pelarangan Pemakaian Jilbab bagi Siswi di Bali pada Surat Kabar Harian *Republika* Edisi Februari-Mei 2014" (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Hervina Septiana, "Berita Pelarangan Jilbab Siswi di Bali dalam Bingkai SKH *Republika* Edisi Januari-Juni 2014" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2015).

their hair uncovered, arguing that Bali is not the Middle East. This statement reflects an exclusionary logic that positions the hijab as incompatible with Balinese public identity and professionalism, thereby marginalising Muslim women's visibility in local workplaces. This statement, which went viral on social media, sparked widespread criticism and condemnation.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, these incidents demonstrate that discrimination against Muslim women in Bali is not merely symbolic or isolated, but embedded in everyday interactions and institutional discourses, even though it remains under-theorised in existing academic literature.

Religious expression for young Muslim women in Bali extends beyond identifiable symbols, such as clothing. Among the challenges they face are issues of religious conversion due to romantic relationships and pregnancies outside of marriage. Based on an interview with a religious leader in Klungkung, during his tenure as the head of a *kampung*, he encountered more than five cases of young Muslim women leaving Islam (*murtad*) in his community. "All of them were due to marriage, generally because of pregnancies outside of marriage," he revealed.

William James' theory of religious conversion, as summarized by Mulyadi and Mahmud<sup>5</sup> suggests that conversion occurs when a psychological force dominates the core habits of an individual, leading to the emergence of a new and stable perception. Conversion can also occur due to a crisis or spontaneously without a process. In this context, unplanned pregnancies are a psychological factor that can prompt religious conversion.<sup>6</sup> Further highlights

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<sup>4</sup> CNN Indonesia, "Senator Bali Arya Wedakarna Buka Suara Soal Viral Ucapan Hijab," CNN Indonesia, January 2, 2024, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20240102150034-32-1044373/senator-bali-arya-wedakarna-buka-suara-soal-viral-ucapan-hijab>; Rizki Suryarandika, "Senator Bali Permasalahan Hijab, Ibu Iriana pun Pernah Berjilbab," Republika, January 1, 2024, <https://www.republika.id/posts/49360/senator-bali-permasalahan-hijab-ibu-iriana-pun-pernah-berjilbab>; Achmad Ali Fiqri, "Buntut Rendahkan Jilbab, Arya Wedakarna Dipecat dari DPD RI," Sindo News, February 2, 2024, <https://daerah.sindonews.com/read/1312915/174/buntut-rendahkan-jilbab-arya-wedakarna-dipecat-dari-dpd-ri-1706864554/5>; Alfian Syukri, "Buntut Ucapan Arya Wedakarna Soal Hijab, Muhammadiyah Bali Akan Laporkan ke Polda Bali," TVOne News, January 3, 2024, <https://www.tvonenews.com/daerah/bali/178821-buntut-ucapan-arya-wedakarna-soal-hijab-muhammadiyah-bali-akan-laporkan-ke-polda-bali>.

<sup>5</sup> Mulyadi Mulyadi and Mahmud Mahmud, "Konversi Agama," *Tarbiyah Al-Awlad: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam Tingkat Dasar* 9, no. 1 (2019): 29–36, <https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/alawlad/article/view/1618/>.

<sup>6</sup> Hoko Horii, "Child Marriage as a 'Solution' to Modern Youth in Bali," *Progress in Development Studies* 20, no. 4 (2020): 282–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993420977793>.

that modernity in Bali has led to shifts in customary and social norms regarding premarital sex, including increased access to casual sex among minors.

The preliminary findings of this study suggest that young Muslim women in Bali—whether educated in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or not and regardless of their level of religious understanding— face similar risks of religious conversion, abandoning religious symbols, and being influenced by Bali's increasingly open culture shaped by tourism. Social media also plays a significant role in shaping the religious identity of young Muslim women. Globally, and in Bali, social media enables young Muslim women to navigate the tension between piety and fashion while reconstructing their identities, as noted by Kavakci and Kraeplin.<sup>7</sup>

Social media platforms provide a space for identity performance and experimentation with religious interpretations in increasingly conservative societies.<sup>8</sup> This is reflected in how they dress, their involvement in certain religious gatherings (*majelis*), participation in religious organizations, and their engagement with trending religious expressions on a national scale. These dynamics underscore the complex interplay between religious identity, social influences, and modern platforms in shaping the experiences of young Muslim women in Bali.

The transition of youth in social constructs cannot be separated from the social context in which they live, and it is the result of the dialectical interplay between subjective and objective aspects that occur within society.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the social construct within which young Muslim women live, grow, socialize, and develop is closely related to their religious expression. This means that the

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<sup>7</sup> Elif Kavakci and Camille R Kraeplin, "Religious Beings in Fashionable Bodies: The Online Identity Construction of Hijabi Social Media Personalities," *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 6 (2017): 850–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716679031>.

<sup>8</sup> Annisa R. Beta, "Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia," *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (2014): 377–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514524103>; Annisa R. Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers," *New Media & Society* 21, no. 10 (2019): 2140–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819838774>; J. Patrick Williams and M. Nasir Kamaludeen, "Muslim Girl Culture and Social Control in Southeast Asia: Exploring the Hijabista and Hijabster Phenomena," *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal* 13, no. 2 (2017): 199–216, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659016687346>.

<sup>9</sup> Oki Rahadianito Sutopo and Nanda Harda Pratama Meiji, "Transisi Pemuda dalam Masyarakat Risiko: Antara Aspirasi, Hambatan dan Ketidakpastian," *Jurnal Universitas Paramadina* 11, no. 3 (2014): 1164–86.

transition of Muslim women is inseparable from broader social divisions,<sup>10</sup> social change, and intergenerational relations,<sup>11</sup> as well as global unequal ties between metropolitan and peripheral countries.<sup>12</sup> This significantly influences the process of constructing Muslim identity in Bali, which is shaped by the minority status of Muslims, the sociocultural relations between Muslims and other religious communities in Bali, and the reality of Bali as a world tourism destination.

The importance of this research lies in the researcher's interest in uncovering the religious expression of young Muslim women in Bali, a topic that, to date, lacks prior studies. Theoretically, this proposed research demonstrates that young women, particularly Muslim women, in maintaining their religious identity, are influenced by the unique conditions of diversity and religiosity in Bali. Therefore, this study will explore two key interrelated issues: 1) How do young Muslim women recognize, process, express, and negotiate their identity in their daily struggles in Bali? 2) How does interfaith interaction in Bali influence the way young Muslim women express their religiosity?

The objective of this research is to understand how young Muslim women recognize, process, express, and negotiate their identity in their daily struggles in Bali. This goal further examines their daily struggles in religious expression. According to Annisa R. Beta, young Muslim women in Indonesia are positioned significantly differently from the portrayals often seen in Western media.<sup>13</sup> Studies have shown various phases of religious expression stated, "Young women ... have replaced youth as a metaphor for social change ... (and) are now recognized as one of the determining factors of the future."<sup>14</sup> This research also

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<sup>10</sup> Sutopo and Meiji; Rob White and Johanna Wyn, "Youth Agency and Social Context," *Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 3 (1998): 314–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/144078339803400307>.

<sup>11</sup> Sutopo and Meiji, "Transisi Pemuda dalam Masyarakat Risiko: Antara Aspirasi, Hambatan dan Ketidakpastian"; Johanna Wyn and Dan Woodman, "Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia," *Journal of Youth Studies* 9, no. 5 (2006): 495–514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260600805713>.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Najib Azca, "Yang Muda, yang Radikal: Refleksi Sosiologis terhadap Fenomena Radikalisme Kaum Muda Muslim di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru," *Jurnal Maarif* 8, no. 1 (2013): 14–44.

<sup>13</sup> Beta, "Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia."

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Brenner, "Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and 'the Veil,'" *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 4 (1996): 673–97, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1996.23.4.02a00010>; Claudia Nef Saluz, *Islamic Pop Culture in Indonesia is an Anthropological Field Study on Veiling Practices among Gadjah Mada University of Yogyakarta Students* (Bern: Institut für

aims to describe how interfaith interactions in Bali influence the expression of religiosity among young Muslim women, as religious dimensions are not solely personal, individual activities but are also closely tied to social aspects and relationships.<sup>15</sup>

Research tends to focus on comprehensively capturing Muslim life in specific areas of Bali, examining aspects such as history, tolerance, cultural development through acculturation, and religious education. However, youth, particularly women, have been overlooked as a trend in the study of Muslims in Bali. This study fills a gap in academic research by focusing on the religious expression of young Muslim women in Bali amidst its cultural and religious diversity. It examines their challenges as members of a minority Muslim community living within a predominantly Hindu society.

## B. Method

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative method to explore the dynamics of religious expression among young Muslim women in Bali. This approach enables an in-depth analysis and interpretation of phenomena within their natural settings, while avoiding the manipulation of variables. The data collected is both primary and secondary. Primary data includes oral and written information from young Muslim women, community leaders, and Islamic youth organizations, while secondary data comprises prior research on Bali's sociocultural dynamics to serve as supporting and comparative material. Participants are purposefully selected to ensure their relevance to the study's focus on Muslim identity and religious experiences.

Data collection is conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher engages in participant observation by immersing themselves in the daily activities of Muslim women's communities in Klungkung, Gianyar, and Denpasar for six months, following systematic and structured guidelines. In-depth interviews, conducted using

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Sozialanthropologie, 2007), 68; Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 2 (2007): 389–420, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911807000575>; Anita Harris, *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005), 13–23.

<sup>15</sup> Fikria Najtama, "Religiusitas dan Kehidupan Sosial Keagamaan," *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam* 9, no. 2 (2018): 421–50, <https://doi.org/10.32489/tasamuh.214>.

feminist interview techniques, enable participants to share their experiences naturally and openly. These interviews last between 40 and 90 minutes, with follow-up sessions as needed, and focus group discussions are used to gather additional perspectives. Documentation involves both primary sources, such as personal letters and recordings, and secondary sources, like official reports and manuscripts.

## C. Results and Discussion

### The Process of Recognition and Expression of Young Muslim Women's Identity in Bali

Historically, the Muslim population in Bali is divided into two major groups. The first group comprises descendants of 14th-century migrants, often referred to as *orang kampung*. This group resides in Islamic villages such as Loloan (Jembrana), Pegayaman (Buleleng), Toya Pakeh, Gelgel, Kusamba (Klungkung), Serangan, Kepaon, Suwung, and Tanjung Benoa (Badung/Denpasar).<sup>16</sup> Researchers on Bali have labeled this group as Bali Islam, i.e.: Korn,<sup>17</sup> Grader,<sup>18</sup> Barth,<sup>19</sup> or Bali Melayu, i.e.: Bagus,<sup>20</sup> and Sumarsono.<sup>21</sup> The terms Bali Islam or Islam Bali (Muslim Bali) originate from older terminologies referring to Muslim *kuno* (ancient Muslims), who have genealogical ties, kinship bonds, and *menyama braya* (a close familial relationship) with the broader Balinese community. Culturally and historically, they are an integral part of Balinese society. Geographically, they do not trace their origins outside Bali and often identify as Balinese, typically followed by the name of their region, such as Loloan, Kepaon, or Serangan.

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<sup>16</sup> I Putu Gede Suwitha, *Dari Dunia Maritim hingga Masyarakat Urban di Bali dalam Kajian Sejarah*, ed. Slamet Trisila (Denpasar: Pustaka Larasan, 2019), 12-25.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Emanuel Korn, "Het Adatrecht van Bali," 1932.

<sup>18</sup> Christiaan Johan Grader, "Verslag over Mohammedaansche Gemeenschappen Op Bali," 1937.

<sup>19</sup> Fredrik Barth, "Kelompok Etnik dan Batasannya," 1988.

<sup>20</sup> I. G. N. Bagus, *Laporan Penelitian tentang Latar Belakang Sosial-Budaya Komunitas Bali Melayu/Loloan dan Repertoar Bahasa Bali-Melayu-Indonesia* (Singaraja: Balai Penelitian Bahasa Singaraja, 1978).

<sup>21</sup> Sumarsono Sumarsono, *Pemertahanan Bahasa Melayu Loloan di Bali* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1993), 17.

The second group comprises those who migrated to Bali in the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to socio-economic factors. These migrants came from Sasak (Lombok), Madura, and East Java. They are now spread across coastal villages in Jembrana and Buleleng. This group also includes migrants who arrived after the 1970s, driven by Bali's booming tourism industry. Often referred to as Muslims in Bali,<sup>22</sup> they represent a more recent wave of migration compared to the first group.

This division is significant in understanding the differing identities carried by Muslim women (Muslimah) from these two groups. Women from the first group, who identify as Muslimah Bali, generally share not only ancestral ties but are also fluent in Balinese, some carry Balinese names, and often have familial ties with Hindu communities. In contrast, women from the second group do not identify themselves as Balinese. Even if born in Bali, descendants or direct members of the second group typically identify themselves as Javanese, Sumatran, Sasak, or based on their place of origin. They are usually unable to speak Balinese, as their family environments maintain the use of their native regional languages.

In postmodernism, identity is not singular but multifaceted (multi-identity), and every culture is inherently multicultural. Identity is an essential need for every individual or group. In the context of the Muslim community in Bali, key markers of identity include culture and language. Language serves as one of the most widespread tools for identifying characteristics. According to Kramsch, language is a system of signs used to express, shape, and symbolize cultural realities.<sup>23</sup>

This linguistic identification became evident to the researcher during open and professional interactions with the Hindu community. When it was revealed that the researcher could speak Balinese fluently and proficiently, it was often met with surprise. The influx of migrants from various regions in Indonesia, especially Java, has led to the stereotype that Muslims are Javanese, particularly for Muslim women who wear the hijab. The use of Indonesian in social interactions by Muslim women with the Hindu community in Bali can

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<sup>22</sup> Suwitha, *Dari Dunia Maritim hingga Masyarakat Urban di Bali dalam Kajian Sejarah*, 83-89.

<sup>23</sup> Claire Kramsch, "Language and Culture," *AILA Review* 27 (2014): 30-55, <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.27.02kra>.



sometimes create a certain degree of social distance. Different responses and levels of acceptance are often observed when it becomes clear that young Muslim women can speak Balinese fluently and identify as Balinese (first-wave Muslim Balinese). This ability bridges cultural divides and highlights the importance of linguistic and cultural integration in fostering mutual understanding and reducing stereotypes.

The concept outlined above can serve as a reference to observe the evolving identity of the Muslim community in Bali. An interesting aspect of this identity shift is the use of Malay by the Muslim community, particularly in Jembrana. The Malay language spoken in Bali has been referred to by researchers as the distinct “Loloan” dialect. Over time, speakers of this Malay dialect preferred not to be called Bali Islam. Their reasoning was pragmatic, as they felt the term was too conspicuous. They were more comfortable identifying as *nak kampung*, which means “villagers.”

During the New Order era (1969–1998), the development policies of that time influenced local attitudes. The term *nak kampung* began to be perceived as outdated, associated with rural simplicity. Consequently, the name *Melayu Bali* gained popularity as a more modern label.<sup>24</sup>

In the 18th and 19th centuries, during the era of Balinese kingdoms, these communities were referred to as *wong suanantara* or *wong dura negara* (foreigners from outside Bali), based on their ethnic origins, such as Bugis, Mandar, Makassar, or Arab. The markers of identity have always been subject to change. Currently, the trend is to identify based on origins intertwined with religion, such as Islam from Loloan, Islam from Kepaon, and so on.

Some individuals interviewed identify themselves as Balinese Muslims. This longing for a new identity amidst the borderless world of globalization reflects an attempt to construct an identity that serves as a defense against the overwhelming influence of tourism in Bali. Balinese, Islamic, and Malay identities are continuously negotiated, swapped, and redefined in response to the dynamic forces of global and local change.<sup>25</sup>

According to the heterogeneity of Balinese society, it is marked by the reality of numerous differences in *soroh* (lineage) or *warna* (caste).

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<sup>24</sup> Suwitha, *Dari Dunia Maritim hingga Masyarakat Urban di Bali dalam Kajian Sejarah*, 90-100.

<sup>25</sup> Suwitha, 101-5.

Additionally, intermarriage has long occurred, which, over time, has naturally made Balinese society more heterogeneous.<sup>26</sup> Other ethnic groups that have settled on the island since the kingdom era have also multiplied and evolved into several generations, such as the Islamic communities in Kapaon, Loloan, Pegayaman, Gelgel, and several Islamic villages in Karangasem.

In this context, the identity of the Islamic community in Bali is fluid, dynamic, and varied. Identity is deliberately formed and not inherited (given). According to Bourdieu (2018), identity is never fixed; it is always changing, incomplete, fragmented, and continuously fabricated or constructed to adapt to the evolving needs. Furthermore, Barth (1988) argues that identity and ethnicity are not only ascriptive but also a political struggle for economic and political resources.<sup>27</sup>

As a dynamic concept, young Muslim women in Bali typically shape their identities through two paths. The first is inherited identity, rooted in their historical presence in Bali. The second is a dynamic, constructed identity that young Muslim women develop as they grow into adulthood. This identity is influenced by factors such as place of residence, educational background, organizations in which they participate, professions they pursue, and so on. Together, these aspects form the multifaceted identity of young Muslim women in Bali.

Based on the author's research, the introduction of inherited and traditional identity is conducted in two ways: *First*, parental and familial reinforcement. Parents and family members explicitly and openly convey that young Muslim women are followers of Islam and must adhere to Islamic principles. These parents often provide religious guidance, emphasize their religious identity, and establish clear boundaries and guidelines for social interactions that align with their values. *Secondly*, understanding identity through external education. In some cases, young Muslim women come to understand their identity through their environment and religious education outside the family. Here, parents do not directly emphasize the Muslim identity but instead strengthen it through teachers, religious institutions, or educational

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<sup>26</sup> I. Ketut Ardhana, F. X. Soenaryo, and Suwitha Sulandjari, "Komodifikasi Identitas Bali Kontemporer," 2012, 74.

<sup>27</sup> Barth, "Kelompok Etnik dan Batasannya," 17-23.

programs. As a result, young Muslim women naturally come to comprehend the essence of their identity. The formation of identity within the context of being a minority in Bali is particularly urgent and critical for young Muslim women. This includes understanding social boundaries, navigating the limits of religious expression, and negotiating between social interactions and religious obligations.

Historical literature notes that when the Bali bombings occurred in 2002 and 2005,<sup>28</sup> the situation quickly stabilized thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Islamic community in Bali, spearheaded by religious leaders. Alongside this recovery, the arrival of Islamic students from Java's *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) strengthened the identity of Balinese Islam—an Islam rooted in Bali. Interestingly, during Eid al-Fitr, Muslims originating from Bali return to their Islamic villages spread across the island.<sup>29</sup> Many young Muslim women in Bali choose to pursue education in *pesantren* in Java. During holidays or Eid celebrations, they return to their homes in Bali. Additionally, *pesantren* have begun to emerge within Bali itself, such as *Pesantren Diponegoro* in Klungkung, *Bali Bina Insani* and *Roudlotul Huffadz* in Tabanan, and *At-Taqwim* in Karangasem. These institutions cater to Balinese Muslims, particularly those from the first and second periods, who prefer *pesantren* closer to home.

Apart from attending *pesantren*, many young Muslim women continue their studies in *madrasah* (Islamic schools) or public/private schools in their regions. *Madrasah* education allows young Muslim women to receive more comprehensive religious instruction within an Islamic environment. However, some also choose public schools where they are a minority, often drawn by the schools' quality and other attractions. These educational differences significantly influence how young Muslim women express and identify with their religion. Findings from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving dozens of young Muslim women and men revealed a correlation between religious education and expressions of religiosity. The discussion highlighted that structured and systematic faith-based education from an early age significantly impacts religious knowledge and practice. Therefore, continuous education, not only religious but also systematically integrated, is essential.

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<sup>28</sup> Leo Howe, *The Changing World of Bali: Religion, Society and Tourism* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), 1-4.

<sup>29</sup> Suwitha, *Dari Dunia Maritim hingga Masyarakat Urban di Bali dalam Kajian Sejarah*, 71-82.

Religious dimensions are reflected in daily life patterns and worldviews, showing diverse interpretations and expressions of religious teachings. Despite the varied paths taken, religious rituals consistently affirm the recognition of differences as blessings while emphasizing an interconnected essential unity. These rituals shape individuals not only in terms of religiosity but also in how they understand and practice their beliefs. Personal understanding, knowledge, and faith have varied psychological impacts during the same practices, forming an essential dynamic in religious behavior that is evident in everyday life.

The expression of religiosity among young Muslim women in Bali, as analyzed in this study, can be categorized into four types of expressions:

#### 1. Ritual Religious Expression

Ritual religious expression refers to the practice of religiosity through acts of worship (both ibadah *mahdah* or specific religious rituals) carried out by young Muslim women, such as prayer (salat), fasting (*puasa*), and almsgiving (zakat), performed in both public and private spaces. This form of expression also encompasses faith as a manifestation of "*al-imānu ma'rifatu bil qalbi wa qaulu bilisāni wa 'amalu bil arkāni*," meaning that faith is not only believed in the heart but also professed verbally and practiced through actions. Ritual religiosity also involves how young Muslim women adapt to limited facilities<sup>30</sup> for performing salat in public spaces, restraining hunger and thirst during Ramadan while living amidst a Hindu-majority community that continues to eat and drink during the day, adjusting their schedules during public holidays on Islamic holy days, and observing Friday prayers during the Hindu *Nyepi* (Day of Silence). These expressions of religiosity cannot be freely practiced by young Muslim women in Bali due to the conditions described above.

#### 2. Cultural-religious Expression

Cultural-religious expression refers to expressions of religiosity that align with local culture and wisdom, particularly in aspects of *fiqh mu'āmalah* (social transactions) between young Muslim women and both fellow Muslims and people of other faiths. In Bali, with its spirit of tolerance, the concept of *mu'āmalah* becomes an intriguing topic, offering unique insights into cultural and religious expressions, especially in the context of the religious lives of

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<sup>30</sup> Achmad Muchaddam Fahham, "Dinamika Hubungan Antarumat Beragama: Pola Hubungan Muslim dan Hindu di Bali," *Aspirasi: Jurnal Masalah-Masalah Sosial* 9, no. 1 (2018): 63–82, <https://doi.org/10.46807/aspirasi.v9i1.1148>.

Muslim women in Bali. This expression is evident in young Muslim women's participation in various religious cultural activities, such as Halal bi Halal and the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi), held in mosques or ancient Islamic villages in Bali. They also engage in traditions like *ngejot* (sharing food), *megibung* (communal dining), and affiliating with organizations that support the preservation of cultural religiosity. For instance, the celebration of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha in Pegayaman Village reflects distinctive local traditions that enrich the religious expressions of the Muslim community there.

Cultural aspects steeped in tradition are more commonly found in ancient Muslim villages, such as among early generations of Muslims. In urban areas like Denpasar and Gianyar, cultural elements often draw inspiration from the traditions of the communities' regions of origin, such as Java, Lombok, or others, reflecting the dominant culture of these groups. Additionally, in various Muslim communities, there are numerous religiously based social groups and organizations. In Islamic villages across Klungkung, young Muslim women are generally active in youth mosque organizations, providing them with a platform for social-religious, youth, personal development, and cultural activities specific to Bali's Muslim communities. For example, one young Muslim woman from Klungkung served as the leader of the Youth Mosque Organization in Kusamba Islamic Village. She organized various competitions culminating in a grand event celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi).

### 3. Visual Religious Expression

Visual religious expression is manifested through the clothing worn, such as hijab styles and the use of attire in public, professional, and private spaces. This form of religious expression is particularly significant for young Muslim women in Bali. Following the Bali bombings in the past, young Muslim women wearing the hijab have often faced verbal discrimination or, in some cases, direct or indirect exclusion from professional institutions due to their attire. Terrorism, as a global phenomenon, has occurred in various parts of the world, including the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States on September 11, 2001,<sup>31</sup> the Paris attacks in November 2015,<sup>32</sup> and the

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<sup>31</sup> Teddy Tri Setio Berty, "10 Fakta Dibalik Tragedi 9/11 yang Terjadi 17 Tahun Silam," *Liputan6*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.liputan6.com/global/read/3640694/10-fakta-dibalik-tragedi-911-yang-terjadi-17-tahun-silam>.

Surabaya bombings in Indonesia in May 2018,<sup>33</sup> In 2019, religiously motivated acts of terrorism continued in Indonesia, involving not only men but also women.<sup>34</sup>

Three psychological tendencies, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism, play a role in shaping prejudice against Muslim women wearing hijabs. Additionally, intergroup anxiety, influenced by personality traits, perceptions, personal experiences, and situational factors, predicts prejudice toward women that wear hijab. This anxiety is heightened when individuals associate women in hijabs with external groups, especially those linked to a history of conflict or radicalism.<sup>35</sup>

One young Muslim woman from Gianyar shared her experience of discrimination during her university studies in Yogyakarta. While interning at a tourist destination, she faced challenges due to her hijab. "However, a doctor who overheard the discussion intervened and approved their application, reasoning that their role did not involve direct interaction with visitors. Despite being accepted, she still experienced discrimination. For example, a staff member made a derogatory comment in Balinese, "Be careful, she might bomb us," not realizing she understood the language. Although her mentor dismissed it as a joke, she diffused the situation with humor.

The trauma and stigma of the Bali bombings have also affected Muslim women professionals. A lecturer at a private university in Bali shared how she was given an ultimatum: to either continue teaching without wearing her hijab or to stop teaching altogether. She chose to leave the institution. For some

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<sup>32</sup> Lintar Satria, "Tersangka Utama Serangan Teroris Paris 2015 Divonis Penjara Seumur Hidup," *Republika*, June 30, 2022, <https://internasional.republika.co.id/berita/re9oj5370/tersangka-utama-serangan-teroris-paris-2015-divonis-penjara-seumur-hidup>.

<sup>33</sup> BBC News Indonesia, "Serangan Bom di Tiga Gereja Surabaya: Pelaku Bom Bunuh Diri Perempuan yang Membawa Dua Anak," *BBC News Indonesia*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-44097913#orb-banner>.

<sup>34</sup> Abdul Halim and Arsyad Sobby Kesuma, "Study of Social Harmony Construction Between Hindu and Muslim Society," *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales* 88 (2019): 82, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8175512>; Annisa Puspita Inderasari, Marselius Sampe Tondok, and Ananta Yudianto, "Prejudice against Veiled Muslim Women: The Role of Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Intergroup Anxiety," *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 6, no. 1 (2021): 33–46, <https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v6i1.7483>.

<sup>35</sup> Inderasari, Sampe Tondok, and Yudianto, "Prejudice against Veiled Muslim Women: The Role of Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Intergroup Anxiety."

Muslim women, wearing a hijab significantly impacts their career paths. A young woman from Denpasar mentioned that, being aware of her identity and the importance of wearing a hijab, she deliberately chose career opportunities that did not conflict with her wearing a hijab. Similarly, a woman from Klungkung left her hotel job after deciding to wear a hijab.

In contrast, some young Muslim women choose not to wear a hijab at work to avoid professional obstacles. Upon returning to their Islamic communities, they resume wearing it. Another respondent shared her experience negotiating her attire at an educational institution where she was the only Muslim and wearing hijab. She openly communicated her clothing boundaries, which were ultimately respected by the institution's leadership. These varied experiences highlight the complexities young Muslim women in Bali face in expressing their religious identity visually, particularly in professional and public settings.

#### 4. Digital Religious Expression

Digital technology and new media have transformed, expanded, and modified religious practices.<sup>36</sup> New media, particularly digital media, challenge traditional configurations of religious and state authority, facilitate the emergence of transnational Muslim publics, and centralize issues of identity politics.<sup>37</sup> Media blurs the boundaries between political and non-political expressions of Muslims<sup>38</sup> and enables the emergence of a "knowledge and da'wah-based economy" that integrates traditional and modern references within various frameworks.<sup>39</sup>

For young Muslim women, mobile media and social platforms create new public spaces <sup>40</sup> and help them navigate their presence in urban

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<sup>36</sup> Heidi A Campbell, "Introduction: The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion," in *Digital Religion* (London: Routledge, 2012), 1–31.

<sup>37</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, "Redefining Muslim Publics," in *New Media in the Muslim World*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1–18; Mohammed El-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis, *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230622661>.

<sup>38</sup> Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 93, 145. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fs6ck>.

<sup>39</sup> Gary R. Bunt, *IMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 279–290.

<sup>40</sup> Rosemary Pennington, "Making Space in Social Media: #MuslimWomensDay in Twitter," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 42, no. 3 (2018): 199–217,

environments.<sup>41</sup> Globally, social media allows young women to negotiate piety with fashion and reconstruct their identities.<sup>42</sup> In Southeast Asia, these platforms enable young women to perform identity, experiment with religious interpretations in increasingly conservative societies,<sup>43</sup> and present their lifestyles to a broader audience.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, young Muslim women in Bali express their religiosity in digital spaces. They share their ideas on religious concepts, participate in and promote discussions held at hotels or mosques by national religious figures, and showcase their fashion styles through social media posts. Some also use these platforms to share their ideals regarding politics, economics, and education.

The transformation of Indonesian Muslim women's self-expression toward becoming pious individuals has shifted significantly since the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>45</sup> Today, the idealized young woman is not only devout and obedient,<sup>46</sup> but also creative and entrepreneurial. Piety has become an integral part of their religious transformation, fostering empowerment in entrepreneurship and engagement with 'sociopolitical issues'.<sup>47</sup>

This digital religiosity reflects the dynamic interplay between modernity and faith, allowing young Muslim women in Bali to redefine and communicate their religious identity while addressing broader societal issues.

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859918768797>; Rosemary Pennington and Hilary E. Kahn, *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 110-118.

<sup>41</sup> Karen Waltrip, "Public/Private Negotiations in the Media Uses of Young Muslim Women in Copenhagen: Gendered Social Control and the Technology-Enabled Moral Laboratories of a Multicultural City," *International Communication Gazette* 75, no. 5-6 (2013): 555-72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513491912>.

<sup>42</sup> Kavakci and Kraeplin, "Religious Beings in Fashionable Bodies: The Online Identity Construction of Hijabi Social Media Personalities."

<sup>43</sup> Beta, "Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia"; Williams and Kamaludeen, "Muslim Girl Culture and Social Control in Southeast Asia: Exploring the Hijabista and Hijabster Phenomena."

<sup>44</sup> Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers."

<sup>45</sup> Brenner, "Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and 'the Veil.'"

<sup>46</sup> Saskia E. Wieringa, "Gender Harmony and the Happy Family: Islam, Gender and Sexuality in Post-Reformasi Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 23, no. 1 (2015): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2015.0244>.

<sup>47</sup> Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers."



### **The Impact of Interfaith Interaction on the Religious Expression of Young Muslim Women**

From the beginning of their arrival in Bali, the Muslim community has exhibited a collaborative rather than confrontational character. They engaged in cultural exchanges, mutually accepting and sharing elements of their respective cultures. In the socioeconomic realm, they became members and leaders of *subak* (Bali's traditional water management organization). Clifford Geertz described this collaboration as arising from their shared membership in voluntary organizations (*seka*), kinship groups, and other farmer organizations (Geertz, 1959). Regarding *subak*, in Jembrana, Muslims have long been members and leaders, as observed by Grader in Banyubiru.<sup>48</sup>

However, this collaborative and accepting nature has evolved and changed. While initially characterized by acceptance, change is now inevitable, not only in social life but also in religious practices. Such changes continue to influence and shape how people practice their faith in the modern era. Globally, the cultural interaction between Balinese and non-Balinese communities can be divided into three phases: 1) The first phase occurred during the era of kingdoms, from the Gelgel Kingdom to the period before Dutch colonization. 2) The second phase took place during the colonial period, marked by the migration of Javanese workers and the entry of Christian missions into Bali, driven by socio-economic factors in the early 20th century. 3) The third phase spans the post-independence era to the tourism boom.<sup>49</sup>

Given that young Muslim women belong to the youth demographic, their cultural interactions extend beyond the third phase, as some of them are descendants of Muslims from the first and second phases. Furthermore, interfaith interactions in Bali and the position of Muslims—particularly Muslim women, as a minority—present numerous challenges to practicing Islam. This study identifies and categorizes several critical aspects of the challenges faced by Muslim women because of interfaith interactions.

Rather than treating these experiences solely as challenges, this study understands them as forms of interfaith interaction through which young

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<sup>48</sup> Grader, "Verslag over Mohammedaansche Gemeenschappen Op Bali."

<sup>49</sup> Yudhis Muhammad Burhanuddin, *Bali yang Hilang: Pendatang, Islam, dan Etnisitas di Bali*, 5th ed. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2012), 49-54.

Muslim women adapt and express their religiosity. These interactions occur across institutional, familial, economic, and everyday social spaces, shaping how religious identity is enacted in practice.

#### 1. Forms of Interfaith Interaction in Religious Education

In line with symbolic interactionism, schools function as social spaces where religious meaning is negotiated through everyday encounters. Access to religious education in Bali faces numerous obstacles, including both the administration of such education and the experiences of students in schools. The presence of Islamic schools (*madrasah*) in Balinese society is a positive step toward fulfilling the need for religious education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. However, *madrasah* education tends to be more expensive than public schools, prompting parents to opt for public schools, which may lack access to qualified Islamic religious teachers.

Findings from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) reveal various challenges faced by young Muslim women in Denpasar and Tabanan. Participants reported experiences of bullying when they did not conform to local customs and traditions, with discrimination sometimes supported by teachers. For instance, a participant in Tabanan shared how, during Hindu celebrations students were required to contribute financially to these religious events, and this obligation extended to her as a Muslim. When she voiced her objection, she was openly ostracized by both educators and peers.

Additionally, the lack of facilities for Islamic worship in schools posed another challenge. One participant described being denied the opportunity to pray during school activities such as scouting, even during prayer times. While pursuing undergraduate studies, she faced similar difficulties. Another participant recounted her experience in a public elementary school where Islamic Religious Education was only introduced when she reached the fifth grade. Until then, she had to attend Hindu Religious Education classes. When Islamic classes were finally provided, the space allocated was a small, inadequate room lacking proper facilities and infrastructure.

A young Muslim woman from Gianyar shared her experiences with religious education in her community, which had a very small Muslim population. In the evenings, she attended Quranic lessons in Pesdalem, and at night, her family invited a teacher to her home for additional lessons. According to Crapps, childhood is a critical period for learning and absorbing influences

from one's environment.<sup>50</sup> Religious elements are often instilled during this early developmental stage, as Gleason emphasizes. Within the personal interactions of family life, children first learn the emotional content of religious faith.<sup>51</sup>

Because she only had an Islamic religion teacher starting in fourth grade during elementary school. Before that, she attended classes on Hindu religion. She admitted that every time the class ended, she felt clueless because she did not understand Hinduism at all. Once the Islamic religion teacher arrived and she started receiving Islamic religious education, she claimed to excel in the subject because she had already studied it in the evenings beforehand. The researcher also found several schools in the Gianyar region that do not have Islamic religion teachers. A school principal revealed that he had approached the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gianyar Regency to request an Islamic religion teacher, but the request has not yet been fulfilled. As a result, a PPL (Teaching Practice Program) student majoring in Islamic Religious Education, who happened to be active at the school, was asked to continue teaching. Furthermore, in one subdistrict, the only remaining civil servant Islamic religion teacher admitted to being confused about finding a replacement, as they are set to retire next year. They expressed concern and pity because nearly 70 Muslim students at their school would be left without a teacher.

In contrast, a young Muslim woman from Klungkung received Qur'anic education both at home and at TPQ (Qur'anic Education Center) and *Diniyah* classes at the mosque. The mosque is in the middle of the Islamic village of Kusamba. In addition to these TPQ and *Diniyah* classes, Klungkung is home to various TPQ and *Diniyah Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) centered around the mosque in the Islamic village. As a result, young Muslim women from the traditional Islamic village generally have adequate access to education. Even though this Muslim woman attended public schools from elementary through high school, she never missed out on her religious education rights. She noted,

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<sup>50</sup> Robert W. Crapps, *An Introduction to Psychology of Religion* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986).

<sup>51</sup> Rani Dwisaptani and Jenny Lukito Setiawan, "Konversi Agama Dalam Kehidupan Pernikahan," *Humaniora* 20, no. 3 (2008): 327–39, <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/jurnal-humaniora/article/view/948/>; See also Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195098280.001.0001>.

“But in Klungkung, we always have religious teachers, so there’s no instance of not having or lacking one.” Religious education, according to Willem L. Wardekker and Siebren Miedema, serves as a process of transformation. This perspective emphasizes that religious education should extend beyond merely conveying cognitive information about faith. Instead, it should serve as a tool to help learners shape their personal identities by integrating daily life experiences with profound religious dimensions.<sup>52</sup> This makes understanding and acquiring religious education crucial in the personal identity development of young Muslim women.

From a student’s perspective, a young Muslim woman from Denpasar shared her experience teaching Islamic Religious Education at Santo Yoseph Catholic High School in Denpasar. This school stands out for embracing religious diversity, recognizing and teaching six officially acknowledged religions. Each religion is represented by a teacher who guides students according to their respective faiths. A notable policy in this school is the extended break on Fridays, allowing Muslim students to attend Friday prayers.

She views her role not merely as a religious educator but as a mentor, helping students explore and understand their identities within a diverse environment. Through an inclusive and educational approach, she aims to instill Islamic values while acknowledging the pluralistic reality her students encounter daily. As a teacher, she has observed diversity not only in the school environment but also in her students’ backgrounds. Among her students, only one comes from a fully Muslim household where both parents share the same faith. Most students have mixed religious backgrounds or come from divorced families. During introductions, students often share stories reflecting their complex family lives, such as, “I have two fathers—one is Muslim, and the other follows a different religion.”

This scenario poses unique challenges for her as an Islamic Religious Education teacher, while simultaneously providing opportunities to foster understanding of diversity and tolerance. Young Muslim women in Bali, who initially receive religious understanding through formal and informal education, often take on the role of imparting religious knowledge themselves.

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<sup>52</sup> Willem L. Wardekker and Siebren Miedema, “Identity, Cultural Change, and Religious Education,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 23, no. 2 (2001): 76–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141620010230202>.

In regions where Muslims are a minority, this includes addressing the needs of students from varied and complex backgrounds.

## 2. Interfaith Intimacy, Marriage, and Religious Boundary

Interfaith marriage and intimacy represent a form of close social interaction where religious boundaries are renegotiated. Young Muslim women in Bali face significant challenges, especially as a minority, with one of the most pressing being the decision to convert from Islam to another religion, typically Hinduism. The term “conversion” in English encompasses meanings such as “repentance, switching, changing, or entering a religion.”<sup>53</sup> Terminologically, religious conversion has several definitions. According to Thouless, religious conversion is the process of adopting a religious attitude that can occur gradually or suddenly. Max Heirich, on the other hand, defines it as the action of an individual or community transitioning to or embracing a belief system or behavior contrary to their previous convictions.<sup>54</sup>

Through the researcher’s observations, more than five cases of apostasy among young Muslim women in Bali were identified. Research conducted by Hadiono and Sya’roni,<sup>55</sup> suggests that most conversions are driven by interfaith marriages fueled by love and interactions between individuals (male/female) who decide to marry. This phenomenon is common in Bali, where conversion from Islam to Hinduism often occurs due to premarital pregnancy, leading to marriage to legitimize the birth of the child. Horii’s doctoral research<sup>56</sup> on child marriage also found instances linked to pregnancy. In 2017, 20 cases were documented, with 11 involving pregnancies leading to child marriages, 5 resulting in child marriages without pregnancies, and 4 involving pregnancies without subsequent marriages. This research highlights how the liberal social

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<sup>53</sup> Andi Alfianto Anugrah Ilahi and Arifuddin Arifuddin, “Pengaruh Kualitas Pelayanan terhadap Kepuasan Nasabah Bank,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Amsir* 1, no. 1 (2022): 25–37, <https://journal.stieamsir.ac.id/index.php/abrij/article/view/123>.

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Aminuddin Shofi, “Marriage and Religion: Dynamics of Religious Conversion in Marriage and The Advancement of Community Religious Life Perspective of Religious Psychology and Sociology (Study in Lumajang Regency),” *Dialog* 44, no. 1 (2021): 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialogv44i1.422>.

<sup>55</sup> Abdi Fauji Hadiono and Imam Sya’roni, “Faktor-Faktor Penyebab Melakukan Tindakan (Konversi) Pindah Agama (Studi Kasus Pindah Agama di Desa Karadenan, Kecamatan Purwoharjo Kabupaten Banyuwangi),” *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2015): 27–42, <https://ejournal.iainda.ac.id/index.php/darussalam/article/view/63>.

<sup>56</sup> Horii, “Child Marriage as a ‘Solution’ to Modern Youth in Bali.”

environment in Bali can lead to casual relationships and unintended pregnancies.

In Kampung Islam Lebah, Klungkung, a mosque youth organization emphasizes the importance of “saving young women from apostasy.” This mission drives various social activities, encouraging interactions among young people within the Islamic community and promoting education from a religious perspective. Community leaders and youth actively engage in initiatives like matchmaking within the Muslim community to prevent conversions. Several factors influence religious conversion. According to Jalaluddin, as cited by Dwisaptani and Lukito Setiawan,<sup>57</sup> these include divine guidance, social influences such as personal relationships, invitations from others, or external and internal psychological factors that create emotional stress. Rambo also asserts that social crises can induce tension, potentially leading to conversion.

These influences align with the experiences of young Muslim women in Bali. Social and psychological pressures, particularly for those experiencing unplanned pregnancies, exacerbate their vulnerabilities. Premarital pregnancies often result in psychological turmoil, stemming from internal conflicts and external pressures from society, family, and religious norms. Some women address these pressures through marriage, even if it requires religious conversion. Despite these challenges, the level of vulnerability varies. A young Muslim woman from Gianyar, when asked if she had ever considered converting, stated she never had. Although her extended family is Hindu, they never pressured her to convert, even though her parents’ interfaith marriage was initially opposed. Her mother, a high-caste Hindu, converted to Islam upon marrying her father.

Similarly, a young Muslim woman from Denpasar admitted she once entertained the idea of leaving Islam, not out of discontent but due to curiosity about Hinduism. However, she consciously limits interactions with men from other religions to avoid developing feelings that might lead to complications.

### 3. Everyday Interfaith Interaction through Halal Consumption Practices

Halal consumption illustrates routine interaction between religious norms and public space. In Islam, halal consumption signifies both a legal and spiritual commitment, linking bodily nourishment to moral integrity and obedience to

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<sup>57</sup> Dwisaptani and Setiawan, “Konversi Agama dalam Kehidupan Pernikahan.”

divine law. For Muslims in Bali, maintaining halal dietary practices within a Hindu-majority context requires constant vigilance. Beyond ingredients, concerns extend to preparation processes, cross-contamination, and the religious identity of food providers. Many avoid eateries that serve pork or purchase meat only from Muslim butchers who perform Islamic slaughter (*zabiha*).

Due to limited halal infrastructure, especially outside Denpasar, Muslims often rely on informal indicators such as Islamic symbols, sellers wearing hijab, or the absence of *banten* (Hindu offerings) to identify trusted food sources. This selective vigilance reflects an embodied form of religious discipline shaped by minority status. As noted by Soesilowati and Yuliana,<sup>58</sup> Muslims in Bali display stronger behavioral control and awareness of halal consumption compared to those in majority-Muslim regions, illustrating how scarcity reinforces religious consciousness.

However, generational shifts are visible. Younger Muslim women tend to adopt more pragmatic approaches, considering food permissible if it does not contain pork, even when prepared in mixed establishments. Yet others, as in the case of a young woman from Denpasar, continue to exercise strict caution—refusing meals from vendors who also serve pork despite well-intentioned separation. These everyday negotiations reveal how Muslim minorities in Bali sustain religious boundaries while adapting to the realities of interreligious coexistence.

#### 4. Daily Interfaith Social Interaction and Negotiation of Difference

Daily social exchanges reflect ongoing interactional negotiation rather than open conflict. For Muslim women in Bali, social life extends beyond intra-religious relations to encompass continuous engagement with the Hindu majority in various spheres, including workplaces, education, kinship, and friendship networks. These interactions are shaped by both openness and subtle boundaries, reflecting the negotiation between religious identity and social belonging. A Muslim woman from Gianyar described mutual visits between Muslim and Hindu relatives during major religious celebrations such

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<sup>58</sup> Endang Sri Soesilowati and Chitra Indah Yuliana, "Komparasi Perilaku Konsumen Produk Halal di Area Mayoritas dan Minoritas Muslim," *Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan* 21, no. 2 (2013): 49–60, <https://jurnalekonomi.lipi.go.id/index.php/JEP/article/view/65>.

as Eid and *Galungan*, illustrating patterns of coexistence built upon respect and reciprocity.

However, these encounters are not free from discomfort. Younger Muslim women, particularly newcomers to Bali, often face remarks that underscore their visible difference—questions about their hijab, or suggestions to marry Hindu men “to learn how to make offerings.” Such comments, while sometimes casual, reveal latent stereotypes about Muslim identity within a Hindu cultural framework. The researcher herself reported similar experiences, being asked why she does not “just marry a Hindu” or “return home,” reflecting the social curiosity and implicit boundaries Muslims encounter as minorities.

Despite these moments of tension, Muslim women generally sustain positive relationships with Hindu peers and relatives. They attend Hindu ceremonies and weddings, exchange visits during festivals, and participate in communal life while upholding their faith. These interactions exemplify what can be termed everyday negotiation of belonging—a process through which Muslim women assert religious integrity while fostering interreligious harmony in plural Balinese society.

## Conclusion

The identity of young Muslim women is shaped and introduced by both their parents and teachers through religious education and their living environment. This identity then gives rise to various expressions, such as ritual religious expression, cultural-religious expression, visual religious expression, and digital religious expression.

Interactions in a multi-religious context present challenges for young Muslim women in Bali. These challenges can be categorized into four types: Access to religious education, challenges of religious conversion, adhering to halal dietary principles, dialogue and interactions in daily social life.[s]

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