Religious Symbols in Interfaith Marriages: An Analysis Grounded in Alfred Schutz's Theory of Motives

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DOI: 10.21580/wa.v12i2.28246

Abstract

Religious diversity within families has become an increasingly relevant social phenomenon in contemporary pluralistic societies. This study examines the display of different religious symbols in interfaith families as an effort to foster harmony, employing Alfred Schutz's theory of social action motives, Roland Barthes's theory of symbolic meaning, and Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. This research adopts a qualitative juridical-empirical approach that integrates legal and sociological perspectives. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observations involving five interfaith families residing in Tlogosari Hamlet, Banyukuning Village, Bandungan District, Semarang Regency. Secondary data were collected from legal regulations, academic literature, scholarly journals, and local archives related to interfaith marriage and religious symbolism. The findings reveal that the display of diverse religious symbols functions not only as an expression of individual identity but also as a medium of symbolic communication that strengthens emotional bonds and tolerance among family members. Cognitive dissonance arising from religious differences can be mitigated through adaptive mechanisms such as mutual respect, compromise, and the inculcation of universal values. The study concludes that religious symbols play a crucial social role in maintaining harmony within multireligious families. Future research is recommended to explore legal and educational dimensions in interfaith families more deeply, particularly regarding the transmission of religious values to children, to enhance understanding of social harmony and interreligious coexistence in Indonesia.

Keywoards: Harmony Marriage, Interfaith Family, Religious Symbols.

Abstrak

Keberagaman agama dalam keluarga merupakan fenomena sosial yang semakin relevan dalam masyarakat plural kontemporer. Penelitian ini mengkaji pemasangan simbol agama yang berbeda dalam keluarga beda agama sebagai upaya membentuk keharmonisan, dengan menggunakan teori motif tindakan Alfred Schutz, teori makna simbol Roland Barthes, dan teori disonansi kognitif Leon Festinger. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kualitatif yuridis-empiris yang menggabungkan pendekatan hukum dan sosiologis. Data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi terhadap lima keluarga beda agama di Dusun Tlogosari, Desa Banyukuning, Kecamatan Bandungan, Kabupaten Semarang. Sementara itu, data sekunder berasal dari peraturan perundangundangan, literatur akademik, jurnal ilmiah, dan arsip lokal yang relevan dengan isu pernikahan beda agama dan simbol keagamaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemasangan simbol agama yang berbeda bukan sekadar ekspresi identitas individual, melainkan juga sarana komunikasi simbolik yang memperkuat ikatan emosional dan toleransi antaranggota keluarga. Perbedaan keyakinan yang berpotensi menimbulkan disonansi kognitif dapat diatasi melalui mekanisme adaptasi psikologis, seperti penghormatan, kompromi, dan penanaman nilai universal. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa simbol keagamaan memiliki fungsi sosial dalam memperkuat keharmonisan keluarga multireligius. Rekomendasi untuk penelitian selanjutnya adalah menelaah dimensi hukum dan pendidikan agama anak dalam keluarga lintas iman secara lebih mendalam, guna memperluas pemahaman tentang harmonisasi sosial dan nilai kemanusiaan lintas agama di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci : Keharmonisan Rumah Tangga, Keluarga Beda Agama, Simbol Keagamaan.

A. Introduction

In Indonesia's multicultural society, interfaith marriage has become an increasingly prominent social reality. This phenomenon has given rise to complex dynamics, legally, socially, and psychologically. Normatively, Islamic law does not allow interfaith marriage. However, reality shows that a number of couples still choose to build interfaith households and are even able to maintain stable and harmonious marriages in the long term. This creates tension between theological norms and social practices in society, indicating that there is room for negotiation between religious teachings and general human values.¹

Wahana Akademika: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial

¹ Zidna Ghufron Rosyada, "Perspektif Teori Konflik Terhadap Disharmoni Keluarga (Studi Kasus Di Desa Jetis Lor Kec. Nawangan Kab. Pacitan)" (IAIN Ponorogo, 2024), http://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/28384/1/Zidna Ghufron Rosyada - 101180234 - Skripsi.pdf.

It is in this context that religious symbols become an important element to consider. Religious symbols are not merely physical ornaments or tools for worship, but also representations of identity, values of belief, and even the power of meaning that can shape or break social relations. In interfaith families, these symbols often appear side by side in the same household, such as crosses, the Qur'an, statues of Jesus, prayer beads, or Arabic calligraphy. The existence of these symbols not only reflects plurality of beliefs but also becomes a field of spiritual and social communication that requires mutual understanding so as not to trigger conflict.²

A unique phenomenon occurring in Tlogosari Hamlet, Banyukuning Village, Bandungan Subdistrict, Semarang Regency, shows a pattern of harmonious interfaith relations among five families of different religions. Although they live with different beliefs and display different religious symbols under one roof, family life continues with tolerance and mutual respect. Religious symbols, which in a general context are often considered a trigger for conflict, are instead interpreted as emotional bonds and a means of building social cohesion. This phenomenon raises important scientific questions: how is the meaning of religious symbols mediated in interfaith family life, and how can these symbols function as instruments of social harmonization.³

A number of previous studies have discussed interfaith families from various perspectives, ranging from interpersonal communication,⁴ couple adjustment,⁵ to the dynamics of rituals and the concept of sakinah families,⁶ the concept of sakinah families,⁷ or the reality of family functions.⁸ However, most of these studies still highlight general social relations without placing religious symbols at the center of analysis that connects theological, psychological, and social aspects in the domestic sphere. This is where the novelty of this research lies. This research not only describes interfaith relationships within families but also analyzes the "war of symbols" as a process of negotiating meaning between faith, identity, and social cohesion using an interdisciplinary approach that combines Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory, Roland Barthes' semiotics, and Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance.

² Teuku Ahmad Naufal and Maulida, "Agama Dan Hyper Religiusitas Di Era Digital: Hyper Religiusitas Di Tengah Revolusi Teknologi Informasi," *Relinesia* 4, no. 1 (2025): 63, https://jurnal.researchideas.org/index.php/relinesia/article/view/452.

³ Kepala Dusun, Wawancara oleh penulis, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025

⁴ Nia Kurniati Syam, Arifin Syatibi, and Moh. Jibral Imperial Day, "Simbol-Simbol Dalam Komunikasi Keluarga Beda Agama," *MIMBAR: Jurnal Sosial Dan Pembangunan* 31, no. 2 (2015): 419–28, https://ejournal.unisba.ac.id/index.php/mimbar/article/viewFile/1495/1122.

⁵ Bonar Hutapea, "Dinamika Penyesuaian Suami-Istri Dalam Perkawinan Berbeda Agama (the Dynamics of Marital Adjustment in the Interfaith Marriage)," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial* 16, no. 1 (2011): 101–22, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/492911730.pdf.

⁶ Muhammad Chairul Huda and Ilyya Muhsin, "Liminality Rituals of Interfaith Families: Symbolic Interactionism and Maqashid Sharia Perspectives," *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (May 15, 2022): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.30659/JUA.V5I2.20488.

⁷ Nova Effenty Muhammad, "Realitas Perkawinan Beda Agama Perspektif Keluarga Sakinah," *Al-Mizan* 16, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 273–98, https://doi.org/10.30603/AM.V16I2.1830.

⁸ Mukti Ali, "Menangkal Konflik Dari Ruang Sempit Potret Keluarga Pemeluk Beda Agama Di Jawa" (Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, 2017), http://e-repository.perpus.uinsalatiga.ac.id/4121/.

Conceptually, this research contributes to the development of Islamic family law studies by offering a new perspective on how Sharia values, such as *al-mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf* (good relations) and *la darar wa la dirar* (no harm), can be applied in a multireligious family context without obscuring the principles of faith. Empirically, this study enriches the literature on interfaith harmonization practices at the family level, which has rarely been examined from both symbolic and Islamic legal perspectives simultaneously.

This research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how religious symbols are internalized, interpreted, and negotiated in multireligious families. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining the sociology of religion, Islamic family law, and social psychology studies, this study seeks to unravel symbolic practices in the domestic sphere and their impact on the sustainability of marital relationships, child-rearing patterns, and interactions with the wider social environment.

By placing symbols at the center of its study, this research not only broadens the academic horizon in the study of Islamic family law and the sociology of religion, but also provides practical contributions to efforts to strengthen tolerance, interfaith family education, and the formation of a model of social harmony based on universal human values in Indonesia's pluralistic society.⁹

B. Research Methods

This study uses an empirical legal approach with an emphasis on social practices in the context of interfaith families, particularly in relation to the display of different religious symbols within a single household. The empirical legal approach was chosen because it is able to combine legal norms and social realities in the field, as well as allowing researchers to directly observe how the law is understood and applied in practice within society.¹⁰

The type of research used is qualitative juridical-empirical, which combines legal analysis methods with a sociological approach. This approach allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how religious symbols are used in interfaith families, as well as how these practices are perceived and carried out by social actors. The main objective of this method is to find the relationship between Islamic family law norms, different religious practices within a family, and the social meaning of these religious symbols.¹¹

The research was conducted in Tlogosari Hamlet, Banyukuning Village, Bandungan Subdistrict, Semarang Regency. This hamlet was selected purposively because it is home to a number of families living in interfaith marriages who openly display their respective religious symbols in their domestic spaces. In addition, the community in this hamlet shows a

⁹ Sopyan Hadi and Yunus Bayu, "Membangun Kerukunan Umat Beragama Melalui Model Pembelajaran Pai Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Pada Penguruan Tinggi," *Tarbiyah Wa Ta'lim: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 8, no. 2 (2021), https://journal.uinsi.ac.id/index.php/Tarbiyawat/article/view/3111.

¹⁰ Nurul Ulfatin, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Di Bidang Pendidikan : Teori Dan Aplikasinya* (Malang: Media Nusa Creative, 2022).

¹¹ Suyanto, Metode Penelitian Hukum Pengantar Penelitian Normatif, Empiris Dan Gabungan (Gresik: Unigres Press, 2023), Hal.23

relatively high level of tolerance among religious communities, making it a relevant location for this research.

The research subjects were five interfaith families living in Tlogosari Hamlet. The criteria for selecting subjects included: (1) husband and wife with different religious backgrounds, (2) living under one roof and actively maintaining a household, and (3) displaying different religious symbols in their homes. Subjects were selected purposively and based on recommendations from community leaders and the local hamlet head.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with each couple in interfaith families, focusing on the meaning of religious symbols, experiences of living together in diversity, and strategies for managing harmony. Observations were made of the home environment, particularly the placement of religious symbols and interactions between family members. Documentary studies were used to support primary data, such as quotations from laws and regulations, supporting literature, and local archives.

The data collection technique used triangulation to ensure that the information obtained was not only subjective but also had objective validity through cross- comparison of methods and data sources. ¹² All collected data were analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative and prescriptive approach, which included three stages: (1) description of the phenomenon, (2) theory-based explanation, and (3) synthesis of laws or norms.

In the analysis process, the researcher used an integration of the theories of Alfred Schutz (phenomenology of social action), Roland Barthes (semiotics of religious symbols), and Leon Festinger (cognitive dissonance) to understand the context of the meaning and impact of religious symbols in interfaith families. This analysis aims to provide a holistic picture of how religious symbols are not only visual elements, but also social mechanisms in maintaining harmony in multireligious families.¹³

C. Results and Discussion

Motives for Displaying Different Religious Symbols in Interfaith Families According to Alfred Schutz's Theory

Based on the results of research in Banyukuning Village, Bandungan District, Semarang Regency, a phenomenon was found where different religious symbols were displayed within a single multireligious family. This phenomenon reflects complex social dynamics, where tolerance and respect for differences in beliefs are the main foundations for maintaining family harmony. The religious symbols displayed are not merely aesthetic elements, but rather a form of non-verbal communication that represents recognition of the spiritual identity of each family member. This practice shows that the domestic space can be

¹² Muhammad Syahrum, *Pengantar Metodologi Penelitian Hukum: Kajian Penelitian Normatif, Empiris, Penulisan Proposal, Laporan Skripsi Dan Tesis* (Bengkalis: Dotplus Publisher, 2022).

¹³ Solichin Abdul Wahab, *Analisis Kebijakan: Dari Formulasi Ke Penyusunan Model-Model Implementasi Kebijakan Publik* (Jakarta: PT. Bumi Aksara, 2021).

an arena for the internalization of pluralistic values and adaptive strategies in building social cohesion amid religious diversity.¹⁴

Religious symbols displayed in the household environment of a multireligious family do not only serve as visual ornaments or expressions of religion, but also function as tools for spiritual protection and reminders of the noble values upheld by each member of the family. In this context, religious symbols play a dual role, namely as a representation of personal beliefs and as a medium of non-verbal communication that strengthens social bonds in the domestic sphere. The installation of these symbols has strong spiritual relevance because it strengthens religious identity, as well as social relevance because it is able to maintain harmony, balance, and mutual respect in interactions between family members of different religions. Case studies of several families in Banyukuning Village show a diversity of approaches in managing religious diversity through these symbolic practices.

For example, the S and BN families interpret the display of religious symbols as a concrete form of respect for their partner's beliefs and as a way of strengthening family ties. Religious symbols in their homes are not only markers of faith, but also social bonds that affirm a shared commitment to living together in a spirit of mutual respect. Meanwhile, the AM and AW families, who come from Catholic and Muslim backgrounds, place their children's religious freedom as a top priority. They consciously give their children ample space to choose their beliefs according to their conscience, without any pressure or restrictions. This is reflected in the diverse religious symbols in their homes, which reflect an inclusive, open, and democratic attitude in living a multi-religious family life.¹⁶

Another case can be seen in the AW and DH families, who view the display of religious symbols as a form of social awareness and respect, both among family members and towards the surrounding community. Religious symbols serve as reminders of the importance of maintaining harmony in diversity, as well as a form of active participation in building tolerance in a wider social environment.¹⁷ On the other hand, the W and VS families show a more cultural dimension in the practice of displaying symbols. Ancestral traditions passed down from generation to generation form the basis for the management of religious symbols and expressions, which are then combined with the religious teachings of each family member. This approach demonstrates a strong principle of balance, where potential conflicts can be avoided through respect for traditional heritage and a deep understanding of religious values. Religious symbols in this context also serve as tools for educating about the values of pluralism and interfaith dialogue, strengthening social awareness and respect between individuals, both within the family and in the wider community. The concept of the home as a peaceful and inclusive space can be realized by accommodating the religious rights and freedoms of each family member without discrimination.¹⁸

¹⁴ Gusmira Wita and Irhas Fansuri Mursal, "Fenomenologi Dalam Kajian Sosial Sebuah Studi Tentang Konstruksi Makna," *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 06, no. 2 (2022), https://mail.onlinejournal.unja.ac.id/titian/article/view/21211.

¹⁵ Amalia Anisatul Khoirina, "Makna Jilbab Bagi Mahasiswi Universitas Islam Kadiri" (IAIN Kendari, 2022), https://etheses.iainkediri.ac.id/7091/.

¹⁶ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025

¹⁷ Interview with AW, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025

¹⁸ Interview with W, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025

From these findings, it can be concluded that religious symbols in multireligious families not only serve as expressions of personal beliefs, but also as social and cultural instruments that play a role in forming cohesion, building tolerance, and strengthening harmony in diversity. The social implications of this practice are very significant in encouraging the creation of a healthy and sustainable climate of tolerance, where religious diversity is not positioned as a source of disintegration, but rather as a social force and cultural wealth that should be appreciated and nurtured in a pluralistic society.

According to Alfred Schutz, in social life, people act based on two main motives: because of motives arising from existing conditions and past experiences, and in order to motives, which are goals to be achieved through those actions.¹⁹ In the context of displaying different religious symbols in a family with different religious backgrounds in Banyukuning Village, the display of these symbols can be analyzed as meaningful actions influenced by both motives. In terms of because of motive, family members display religious symbols due to the social reality and shared historical experiences related to religious diversity within their families. They have inherited an awareness of the importance of tolerance and respect for religious differences as part of the life experiences that shape their world. Meanwhile, in terms of purpose, the installation of these symbols is carried out with the aim of maintaining harmony, strengthening family ties, and building the home as an inclusive space that accommodates different beliefs without discrimination.

Religious symbols in the home become a medium of non-verbal communication that functions as a marker of social meaning that is intersubjectively agreed upon by family members. This shows that the placement of symbols is not merely a ritual or custom, but a reflective action oriented towards the goal of maintaining peace and bringing pluralistic values to life. In this case, the because of motive comes from past awareness and experience of the importance of tolerance in religious diversity, while the in order to motive reflects the intention to create a harmonious, inclusive family life full of respect among family members of different religions.

The installation of different religious symbols in one house is a concrete example of how meaningful human actions can be analyzed using Schutz's theory, in which past motives (because of motive) and future goals (in order to motive) interact to form inclusive and tolerant social practices. These symbols not only function physically, but also as manifestations of social meaning that live in the intersubjectivity of family members, based on shared experiences and aspirations to live harmoniously in diversity.²⁰

In Islam, the fundamental rule of fiqh is to maintain human relations and harmony in society, especially within the family, which is the smallest but most strategic social unit. The principle of "al-mu'asharah bi al-ma'ruf" (good companionship) emphasizes the need to respect and treat others fairly and gently. From this perspective, the display of different

¹⁹ Tuti Hasana and Desy Misnawati, "Fenomena Pergeseran Makna Budaya Mandi Kasai Di Dusun Pemiri Lubuklinggau, Sumatera Selatanfenomena Pergeseran Makna," *Jurnal Inovasi* 18, no. 1 (2024), https://jit.binadarma.ac.id/journal/index.php/jurnalinovasi/article/view/3491.

²⁰ Liza Gita Lestari, "Pandangan Buya Yahya Terhadap Fenomena Konten Mukbang Tentang Adab Makan Dalam Islam Di Channel Youtube Al-Bahjah Tv" (UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, 2023), http://etheses.uingusdur.ac.id/id/eprint/4063.

religious symbols in the household is a concrete manifestation of the fiqh principle that encourages tolerance and respect for differences as part of the common good.²¹

The concept of "laa dharar wa la dhirar" (no harm and no retaliation) is also relevant in this context. In interfaith families, displaying these symbols can be seen as an effort to prevent social damage and conflicts that may arise due to differences in beliefs. By providing space and respect for the religious symbols of each family member, this step seeks to avoid social harm and maintain household harmony, in accordance with the essence of this figh rule.²²

Another fiqh rule, "al-mashalih al-mursalah," which is decision-making based on the common good that is not explicitly mentioned in the Sharia text, provides the basis for the inclusive display of religious symbols as an effort to maintain the common good of the family. In this context, religious symbols, apart from being an identity of faith, also serve as a unifying tool that prevents religious disputes that can damage family relationships. This is in accordance with the objectives of Sharia (maqasid al-shariah) in maintaining hifz an-nafs (protection of the soul) and hifz al- 'aql (protection of the mind) as well as maintaining social peace.²³

The display of different religious symbols can also be seen through the fiqh concept of "tolerance in religion". In Islam, although Muslims are encouraged to be firm in their beliefs, they are also commanded to respect the diversity of other communities and maintain harmony among religious communities, as stated in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which emphasize the importance of being fair and not forcing others to convert to Islam. Therefore, displaying symbols of other religions in Muslim households can be seen as a form of respect and recognition of the diversity of beliefs held by other family members, as long as it does not conflict with the principle of monotheism and does not interfere with one's own beliefs.²⁴

The concepts of "maslaha" (benefit) and "mafsadah" (harm) in Islamic law also support a positive interpretation of the display of interfaith symbols. As long as these actions bring benefits, namely maintaining harmony, preventing disputes, and strengthening brotherhood among family members, then according to fiqh, these actions are permissible and even recommended. Conversely, if these actions cause significant harm to the faith or peace of the family, then caution is needed and solutions must be sought so that balance is maintained.²⁵

²¹ Naufal and Maulida, "Agama Dan Hyper Religiusitas Di Era Digital: Hyper Religiusitas Di Tengah Revolusi Teknologi Informasi."

Ahmad Naufal, "Pendidikan Islam Dalam Pembentukan Keluarga Sakina MAwaddah Warahmah Menurut Prof.Dr.Zakiah Daradjat," *Repository. Uinjkt.Ac.Id* (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2020), https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/52991.

²³ Fatkul Chodir and Arifin, "Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Maqashid Al- Shariah," *Syariah Journal of Fiqh Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.61570/syariah.v2i1.50.

²⁴ Muhammad Shohib, Silvinatin Al Masithoh, and Fahmul Hikam Al-Ghifari, "Ukhuwah Islamiyah Dan Interaksi Harmonis Antarumat Beragama Di Indonesia: Kajian Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ukhuwah Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v7i2.2934.

²⁵ Abdulahanaa and Mardaniah, *Strategi Mengelola Konflik Budaya Dan Agama Dalam Pernikahan, Mata Kata Inspirasi* (Bantul: Mata Kata Inspirasi, 2024)

By reviewing these principles, the display of different religious symbols in interfaith households in Banyukuning Village can be understood as a concrete implementation of Islamic values that promote peace, respect for differences, and the maintenance of harmonious social relations. This aligns with efforts to build an inclusive household life where family members can live peacefully side by side without having to compromise their respective beliefs. Overall, this concept and figh rule reinforce Alfred Schutz's theory that the act of displaying different religious symbols is not merely a physical activity, but a meaningful and reflective social act, with motives and objectives that simultaneously ensure harmony and tolerance in diversity, as recommended in Islamic law.

The Meaning of Religious Symbols in Interfaith Families in Roland Barthes' View

Religious symbols not only function as markers of religious identity, but also as a medium that connects individuals with their spiritual beliefs and social environment. In the context of interfaith families, particularly in Tlogosari Hamlet, Banyukuning Village, Bandungan Subdistrict, religious symbols have a more complex role. Symbols are not merely sacred objects, but reminders of noble values, a medium for spiritual communication, and a means of building tolerance in family life.²⁶ Using Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, particularly the concepts of denotative and connotative meaning, this discussion explains how these symbols are experienced, interpreted, and contribute to the harmony of families with different beliefs.²⁷

The findings show that religious symbols such as the Qur'an, prayer mats, prayer beads, calligraphy, crosses, images of the Virgin Mary, and statues of Jesus and the Holy Family serve more than just ritual purposes. For interfaith couples, these symbols serve a dual purpose as reminders of their religious obligations and as a means of respecting religious diversity within the household.

The S & BN family said that for them, "The Qur'an, prayer mat, prayer beads, and calligraphy are not just physical objects, but reminders to worship and strengthen their relationship with Allah. The prayer mat is not just a place to pray, but a sacred space to prostrate and draw closer to Him".²⁸ He also respects his wife's Catholic symbols, such as the cross and the statue of the Virgin Mary, which he interprets as symbols of universal love and kindness. This attitude reflects the tolerance inherent in their relationship.

The W & VS family expressed a similar view regarding the meaning of the cross: "For me, the cross is not just an object, but a reminder that God is with us in our lives. This symbol gives us strength of faith when facing life's challenges".²⁹ She also respects her husband's Qur'an and prayer mat even though she does not use them directly, feeling a sense of calm when watching her husband worship. Both experiences show that religious symbols

²⁶ Wulan Dwi Pratiwi, Selvi Sofiawati, and Faikoh Umairoh, "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Poster Serial Drama Queen Of Tears," *Nivedana : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Bahasa* 5, no. 4 (2024), https://jurnal.radenwijaya.ac.id/index.php/NIVEDANA/article/view/1388.

²⁷ Dwi Pratiwi, Sofiawati, and Umairoh.

²⁸ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

²⁹ Interview with W, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

serve not only as an affirmation of religious identity, but also as a social and spiritual glue in interfaith families.

From Barthes' semiotic perspective, the denotative meaning of religious symbols can be understood as their literal, universal significance. At this level, these symbols are understood based on their physical form and main function without subjective interpretation.³⁰ In Islamic tradition, the Qur'an is understood as a holy book containing guidelines for life, prayer mats as a place to pray, prayer beads as a tool for remembrance, prayer robes as special clothing for worship, and calligraphy as the art of writing holy verses that has aesthetic and spiritual value.³¹ In the Catholic tradition, the cross is understood as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, the image of the Virgin Mary as a representation of the mother of Jesus, and statues of Jesus or the Holy Family as visual icons of faith that are often used in personal prayer and devotion.³²

The AM & AW family provides a clear illustration of this denotative understanding. AM states that the Qur'an and calligraphy "are not just texts and written art, but holy books that are read and stored in clean places as a form of respect". 33 Meanwhile, for his Catholic wife, the cross is understood as a symbol of faith that is central to prayer. This denotative understanding forms the basis for mutual respect because each partner recognizes the basic function of the symbol without obscuring its literal meaning.

More than just the literal meaning of religious symbols in interfaith families, they undergo a process of mythologization, which is the development of connotative meanings influenced by emotions, personal experiences, and social contexts, as explained by Barthes. At this level, symbols become a means of deep spirituality, providing a sense of security, strength, and peace for their owners, as well as a bridge of tolerance for couples.³⁴

S (S & BN Family) interprets the prayer mat not merely as a place of worship, but as a sacred space that brings him closer to God. He also understands his wife's cross and statue of the Virgin Mary as symbols of love and steadfast faith, even though he does not use them in worship.³⁵ This shows interfaith awareness in respecting different symbols.

VS (W & VS Family) sees the cross as a source of spiritual strength, "not just a piece of wood in the shape of a cross, but a symbol of hope and protection in the midst of life's challenges." She also feels calm when she sees her husband worshiping with a prayer mat and

³⁰ Widya Pratiwi, "Representasi Budaya Batak Toba Dalam Film Ngeri Ngeri Sedap Karya Bene Dion Rajagukguk (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes)" (Universitas Medan Area, 2023), https://repositori.uma.ac.id/handle/123456789/21398.

³¹ Sani Maulid, "Praktik Pembacaan Al-Qur'an Dalam Kegiatan Istigasah Di Masjid Al - Ikhlas Wangujaya Banjarwangi Garut," *UIN Syarif Hidayatullah* (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2021), https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/63218.

Shakeel Ahmad, "Sakralitas Patung" Tuan Ma" Pada Masyarakat Katolik Di Larantuka Kabupaten Flores Timur," *UIN Syarif Hidayatullah* (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019), https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/49783.

³³ Wawancara Dengan AM, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

³⁴ Mia Nurmaida, Muhammad Kamaludin, and Ririn Risnawati, "Representasi Nilai-Nilai Moral Dalam Novel" Assalamualikum Calon Imam": Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Terhadap Tokoh Dokter Alif," *Jurnal Audiens* 1, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.18196/ja.1102.

³⁵ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

the Qur'an, even though she does not participate in the ritual.³⁶ This process strengthens the family's spiritual bond through mutual respect.

AM (AM & AW Family) initially viewed his wife's cross as merely a religious symbol without personal meaning. However, after watching his wife pray while holding the cross, he realized its deep spiritual significance: "Just as I find peace through the Qur'an, she finds peace through the cross. Our goal is the same: to draw closer to God".³⁷

DH (AW & DH's family), who is Muslim, also experienced a similar transformation. She initially saw the cross, the image of the Virgin Mary, and the statue of Jesus as mere decorations. However, after understanding their meaning to her husband, she came to respect these symbols as a source of inner peace. Her husband, AW, in turn, sees his wife's prayer robe, prayer mat, and Al-Qur'an not only as worship equipment, but as "a source of wisdom and spirit of life that also has a positive influence on our family".³⁸

The S & C family also showed similar connotations. S stated, "The Qur'an is not just a holy book, but a guide to life and a guide for facing life's challenges." He respects his wife's Holy Family statue and cross because he understands that these symbols help his wife feel closer to God.³⁹ All these findings confirm that the connotative meaning of symbols not only strengthens individual beliefs but also builds interfaith understanding, creating an emotional bridge amid differences in belief.

Religious symbols in interfaith families in Tlogosari Village function as a unifying force, not a source of conflict. Through their connotative meanings, symbols become a means of mutual understanding and respect, even a source of shared strength. This process shows that religious differences can be managed harmoniously through an awareness of the function of symbols as spiritual connectors, not dividers. The five families interviewed showed similar patterns of recognition of the denotative meaning of symbols, appreciation of the connotative meaning of their partners, and a willingness to see symbols as part of everyday life without imposing beliefs.

In Islam, religious symbols such as the Qur'an, prayer mats, prayer beads, and calligraphy have meanings that go beyond mere physical objects; they are part of the symbols of Islam that are preserved to strengthen faith and deepen one's relationship with Allah. In fiqh rules, it is stated that "العادة عكمة" (al-a'dah al-muhakkamah), which means that customs or habits that do not conflict with sharia can be considered legal.⁴⁰ In this case, the use of Islamic symbols as a means of worship and spiritual reminder is in line with the purpose of sharia in protecting religion (hifz ad-din).

In the study of maqasid shariah, the use and respect for Islamic symbols can be linked to the principle of preserving the honor of religion (hifz ad-din). The Qur'an is not just a

³⁶ Interview with VS, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

³⁷ Interview with AM, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

³⁸ Interview with DH, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

³⁹ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁴⁰ Iskandar et al., *Hukum Perceraian Adat; Tinjauan Fiqih & Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Perkawinan Di Indonesia* (Bengkalis: Dotplus Publisher, 2021).

holy book to be read, but a legal guide that regulates human life.⁴¹ Therefore, its glorification also has a basis in Islamic law, as in the words of Allah:

"And whoever honors the symbols of Allah, then indeed, it is from the piety of the hearts." (QS. al-Hajj:32)

This research can also be linked to the law of ta'zim li sya'airillah (respect for religious symbols), which means that preserving and respecting the means of Islamic worship is part of a Muslim's piety. This is in line with the fiqh concept of sadduz zara'i (closing the path to wrongdoing), whereby anything that could lead to abuse of religious symbols must be avoided.

When discussing other religious symbols, Islam has the principle of "to you your religion, and to me my religion in QS. al-Kafirun: 6. In social relations, Islamic law emphasizes tolerance towards other religions as long as they do not conflict with the principle of tawhid.⁴² This is in line with the principle of al-daf u asyaddu min al-raf i (avoiding danger is more important than eliminating it), which in this case means that respecting other religious symbols does not mean agreeing with them, but rather preventing conflict and maintaining social peace.

The findings show that religious symbols in interfaith families in Tlogosari Hamlet serve a dual function as religious identity and a medium for social harmony. Through Barthes' semiotic lens, symbols are understood not only in their literal meaning (denotation) but also in their deeper emotional and spiritual meaning (connotation). The five families studied showed that respect for each other's symbols not only enabled household harmony but also strengthened emotional bonds amid differences in beliefs. Religious symbols thus became a medium for tolerance, peace, and complementary spiritual awareness.

Factors Affecting Harmony and Sustainability in Family Relatonships in Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Harmony in interfaith families is a complex issue because it involves the interaction between religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and conflicting social expectations. Religious symbols, whether in the form of places of worship, rituals, holy books, or daily habits, often serve as strong markers of identity for each family member.⁴³ In the context of interfaith marriage, these symbols often become a source of psychological tension. This tension is felt not only by the husband and wife, but also by their children, who must grow up in two different belief systems. The determination of the children's religion, differences in worship

Wahana Akademika: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial

⁴¹ Dudung Abdul Rohman, *Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Keislaman Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Lekkas, 2021).

⁴² Yudi Kuswandi et al., "Metodologi Memahami Ajaran Islam Yang Benar Menuju Masyarakat Madani," *Islamica*: *Jurnal Ilmu - Ilmu Agama Islam* 8, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.59908/islamica.v8i1.127.

⁴³ Jumal Ahmad, "Religiusitas, Refleksi Dan Subjektivitas Keagamaan (Studi Kasus Mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta) TESIS" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020).

practices, religious holidays, and pressure from extended family are the main triggers for potential conflict.

To understand this phenomenon, Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance theory is relevant. This theory explains that when individuals experience inconsistencies between their beliefs, values, and behavior, they will feel dissonance, which is psychological tension that drives them to seek balance through adjusting their attitudes, behavior, or interpretations.⁴⁴ In the context of interfaith families, dissonance reduction strategies are key to maintaining relationship stability.

The couple S (husband, Muslim) and BN (wife, Catholic) illustrate this complex reality. In an interview, S emphasized that his family rarely faced major conflicts, but differences in religious practices such as how to pray, places of worship, and family traditions were major challenges in their household life. The greatest difficulty arises for their children, who often feel confused: "On the one hand, I take them to the mosque, while on the other hand, their mother takes them to church. This sometimes causes them a dilemma in understanding their own religious identity".⁴⁵

BN, the wife, added that there had been pressure from the community for the children to choose one religion. However, they chose a different path. "We realize the importance of providing a more open understanding. Children should not feelforced to choose; they must be given the opportunity to learn about both religions naturally," she said.⁴⁶

The couple applied a strategy of reducing dissonance by creating an inclusive parenting style. They allowed their children to understand the traditions of both religions without coercion, while emphasizing universal values such as honesty, compassion, and respect for differences. According to S, this approach allows children to "grow up with a broader understanding of diversity and be able to appreciate and respect different beliefs". The approach taken by S and BN's family shows how Cognitive Dissonance theory works in practice. Instead of forcing uniformity, they adjust their parenting style to align with reality, minimize internal conflict in their children, and prioritize family harmony over doctrinal differences.

Unlike the S and BN couples, who faced more internal challenges, the W (husband) and VS (wife) couple felt more external pressure from their extended families. W emphasized that within their household, conflict almost never arose. "Conflict actually came from our extended families, who often criticized our decision to maintain our respective beliefs". Simple differences in customs, such as praying before meals or how to celebrate important holidays, often become sources of debate within the extended family. This pressure is especially felt at the beginning of marriage, when the extended family believes that harmony can only be achieved if the couple follows one religion.

⁴⁴ Selfi Ronita, "Disonansi Kognitif Perilaku Konsistensi Pemakaian Jilbab Mahasiswa FUAD IAIN Parepare" (IAIN Parepare, 2022).

⁴⁵ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁴⁶ Interview with BN, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁴⁷ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁴⁸ Interview with W, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

To ease the tension, the couple chose a firm strategy: they set boundaries on communication with the extended family regarding religious issues. "We explained that this marriage was a conscious decision made together, so there was no need for endless debate," explained W.⁴⁹ By limiting discussions about differences in beliefs, they were able to focus on their own household without constantly facing external demands that could trigger conflict.

From the perspective of *Cognitive Dissonance* theory, this attitude reflects an effort to reduce psychological tension by adjusting behavior and interaction boundaries, rather than sacrificing personal beliefs. By asserting healthy boundaries, they are able to maintain emotional balance while strengthening their household's autonomy from outside pressure. Harmony is ultimately maintained not by unifying beliefs, but through controlling external influences that could potentially undermine the stability of the relationship.⁵⁰

The couple AM (husband) and AW (wife) face cognitive dissonance rooted in differences in daily religious practices. Worship, differences in halal and haram food rules, and celebrations of important days became recurring challenges. "Our children who have not yet reached puberty, for example, are often a source of dilemma: should they fast or not? We don't want to force them, but we also want to introduce them to each other's teachings," said AM.⁵¹

Food and worship are two important elements of religious identity, with the potential to cause conflict because each partner adheres to different norms. However, instead of letting these differences become a barrier, AM and AW choose Makanan dan ibadah adalah dua elemen penting identitas religius, to focus on universal values. "Honesty, compassion, and togetherness in the family are far more important than arguing about differences in worship," continued AM.

They also adopted a flexible approach to their children's education. By not imposing a particular religion, they allowed their children to learn about both traditions without pressure. This strategy is in line with Festinger's principle that dissonance can be reduced by finding new aspects that support psychological balance. In this case, the couple uses shared moral values as a foundation, so that differences in religious rituals become relatively secondary to their commitment to family togetherness.⁵²

The harmony they achieve shows that flexibility, an emphasis on shared moral values, and a willingness not to standardize beliefs are key factors that help interfaith families overcome psychological tension. This approach also provides a concrete example of how dissonance reduction can be achieved without sacrificing the religious identity of either party.

The couple AW (husband) and DH (wife) faced challenges similar to those of the W and VS families, namely external pressure from their extended families, especially during

⁴⁹ Interview with W, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁵⁰ Panut Waluyo, "Dinamika Kepatuhan (Obedince) Terhadap Nilai - Nilai Radikal Pada Mantan Narapidana Teroris" (Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, 2019).

⁵¹ Interview with AM, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁵² Septinia Handayani and Nurchayati, "Disonansi Kognitif Pada Perempuan Berhijab Yang Merokok," *Jurnal Psikologi Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2715–6206, https://doi.org/10.35891/jip.v11i1.

major religious holidays such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, or Easter. "The debate did not come from us, but from our extended families who felt that we should follow only one religion," said AW.⁵³

Extended families often view religious holidays as symbols of unity and collective identity. When AW and DH did not fully adhere to one tradition exclusively, discomfort arose that reflected cognitive dissonance on the part of the extended family. They believed that family stability should be based on shared beliefs, while reality showed otherwise.

To ease the tension, AW and DH shifted their focus from ritual differences to the universal values they uphold, such as mutual respect, tolerance, and togetherness. This approach allowed them to emphasize that domestic harmony is not solely determined by religious uniformity, but by the quality of the relationships they have built. On several occasions, they even participated in their partner's religious celebrations as a form of respect. "This does not mean that we are changing our beliefs, but rather it is a form of support and respect," explained AW.⁵⁴

This participation can be understood through the concept of behavioral justification in *Cognitive Dissonance* theory. By adjusting their attitudes to align with their actions, they successfully reduce the inner tension that may arise, both in their relationship and in their interactions with their extended families. This strategy not only maintains harmony in the household, but also helps alleviate the concerns of extended family members that religious differences will be a source of division.⁵⁵

The couple, S (husband) and C (wife), initially believed that religious differences would not be a major obstacle in their marriage. However, after having children, new challenges arose, particularly in parenting and religious education. "I want my children to understand Islamic teachings, while my wife wants them to learn about Catholicism. These differences sometimes trigger minor conflicts, such as deciding what foods are permissible to consume or how to discipline the children," said S.⁵⁶.

This situation creates cognitive dissonance because both parents have conflicting expectations regarding child rearing. Psychological tension becomes more apparent in daily life, especially when the religious principles they adhere to have different rules.

To ease the tension, the couple chose an approach that emphasized shared moral values. Honesty, compassion, and mutual respect became the main foundation for raising their children. In this way, their attention shifted from ritual differences to more comprehensive moral principles. This strategy of reducing dissonance allows them to maintain their respective religious identities while creating a harmonious and tolerant family environment. Their decision reflects the understanding that in interfaith marriages, the sustainability of the relationship does not always depend on uniformity of beliefs, but rather

⁵³ Interview with AW, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

⁵⁴ Interview with AW, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025

⁵⁵ Inke Nur Dewanti and Irwansyah, "Disonansi Kognitif Dalam Perilaku Konsumen Masyarakat Indonesia Terhadap Pembelian Produk Tanpa Logo Halal," *Jurnal Lensa Mutiara Komunikasi* 5, no. 1 (2021): 99–109, https://doi.org/10.51544/jlmk.v5i1.1657.

⁵⁶ Interview with S, Banyukuning, 09 Februari 2025.

on the couple's ability to adapt, communicate, and find common ground beyond doctrinal differences.

From the results of interviews with the five interfaith families, it appears that conflicts in interfaith marriages do not always originate from the couple themselves, but are often triggered by external factors such as pressure from extended families or social expectations. Differences in religious practices, children's education, dietary rules, and religious holiday celebrations are the main sources of cognitive dissonance that can potentially disrupt household stability.

Each family developed unique mechanisms to reduce this psychological tension. The strategies that emerged varied, ranging from creating inclusive parenting patterns that gave children the freedom to learn about both religions, limiting religious discussions with extended family, shifting the focus from ritual differences to universal moral values, to participating in their partner's religious celebrations as a form of respect.

Analysis using Cognitive Dissonance theory shows that success in maintaining harmony and sustainability in interfaith family relationships depends on flexibility, open communication, and the ability of individuals and couples to balance religious identity with the need to maintain interpersonal relationships. For most families, diversity is not seen as a threat, but as a challenge that can be overcome by emphasizing broader human values.⁵⁷

This study confirms that although religious symbols can be a trigger for conflict in interfaith marriages, appropriate dissonance reduction strategies can help couples build harmonious households. It is not uniformity of belief that is key, but a willingness to adapt, respect differences, and make universal values the foundation of the family.

From an Islamic legal perspective, interfaith marriage is one of the issues widely discussed in fiqh or ushul fiqh studies. One of the fiqh rules relevant to this study is "dar'ul mafasid muqaddamun 'ala jalbil mashalih" (preventing harm takes precedence over seeking benefit). This rule teaches that when a condition can cause mafsadah (harm), preventing it is more important than seeking the possible benefits.⁵⁸

In interviews with families who have two different beliefs, it was found that the biggest challenge in their marriage was not only in the husband and wife relationship, but also had an impact on the children who grew up in an environment with two different belief systems. The cognitive dissonance experienced by children, especially in terms of religious practices, is an example of how differences in beliefs can create psychological dilemmas that require appropriate solutions in accordance with the principles of Islamic law.

In the context of maqasid syariah, one of the main objectives of sharia is *hifz ad-din* (preserving religion), which means ensuring that religious values are upheld in family life. However, maqasid syariah also includes *hifz al-'aql* (preserving reason) and *hifz an-nafs* (preserving the soul), which teach that the psychological and mental aspects of children must be taken into account so that they do not experience pressure due to doctrinal conflicts within

⁵⁷ Fildzah Aqila, "Analisis Disonansi Kognitif Pada Perokok Perempuan Di Jakarta," *Ikraith - Humaniora* 8, no. 3 (2024), https://doi.org/10.37817/ikraith-humaniora.

⁵⁸ Indra Permana, "Tinjauan Mashlahah Dalam Penetapan Dispensasi Kawin Pasca Berlakunya Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019: Studi Pada Pengadilan Agama Purwakarta Tahun" (UIN Sunan Gunung Jati, 2023), https://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/73326/.

the family. Therefore, the couple's strategy in developing an inclusive parenting style based on universal moral values such as honesty, compassion, and tolerance can be considered a form of maslahah mursalah, which is a policy taken for the greater good without contradicting the principles of Sharia.⁵⁹

In the context of Islamic law, the solutions applied by some couples reflect the principle of "takhfif" (giving leniency in difficult situations) and the "siyasah syar'iyyah" approach (flexible Sharia policy in accordance with the interests of the people). This shows that interfaith marriages, despite their unique challenges, can remain harmonious if conducted with principles of justice, respect for differences, and a commitment to safeguarding the well-being of children. Awareness of the importance of building mutual understanding within the family is the key to creating harmony without compromising the fundamental values of Islam.

D. Conclusion

This study examines the phenomenon of displaying different religious symbols in interfaith families through three main theoretical frameworks, namely Alfred Schutz, Roland Barthes, and Leon Festinger, which provide a comprehensive picture of the social and psychological dynamics in the context of religious diversity.

First, according to Alfred Schutz's theory of action motives, the act of displaying different religious symbols in families is not merely a meaningless habit, but a motivated social action that explains the collective consciousness and goals of family members in creating a space for dialogue and internal cohesion. This action demonstrates an active effort to maintain harmony while strengthening personal identity within the social structure of multireligious families. Second, based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, religious symbols function as a medium of nonverbal communication that contains shared social meanings, which strengthen the spiritual identity of each member while fostering mutual respect and emotional bonds. These symbols are key elements in building social bonds that allow tolerance to grow naturally amid pluralism of beliefs. Third, through Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, the study revealed that although psychological tension due to religious differences often arises, interfaith families are able to manage and reduce this tension through cognitive adaptation, which includes respect, compromise, and the instilling of shared universal values. This confirms that the harmony of multireligious families depends on their willingness to accept differences and negotiate psychological and social balance.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of symbolic dialogue and psychological adaptation in maintaining harmony in interfaith families. These findings contribute significantly to the development of family law literature and symbolic

⁵⁹ Nurul Arifa, Urdatul Mutia Usqho, and Muhammad Dinul, "Efektivitas Peluang Transaksi Online Di Era Digital Perspektif Maqasid Syariah (Hifz Al-Mal)," *Al Hurriyah : Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.30983/icmil.

⁶⁰ Khoirum Nidhom, "Pandangan Al-QurAn Dan As-Sunnah Tentang Wasatiyyah (Moderasi) Serta Implementasinya Terhadap Hukum Islam," *AT - TAISIR : Journal of Indonesia Tafsir Studies* 2, no. 2 (2021), https://www.academia.edu/download/103430885/69.pdf.

communication in pluralistic societies, particularly in the context of Islam and religious diversity in Indonesia.

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