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Negotiating Religious Identity among Converts in Relationships with Non-Muslim Families in Pampang Cultural Village, Samarinda: A Religious Moderation Perspective

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Abstract

Religious conversion is an experience that involves not only a change in faith but also a process of identity negotiation within family relationships and the broader social environment. This study aims to analyze the religious identity negotiation of converts in their relationships with non-Muslim family members and to identify the practices of religious moderation in Pampang Cultural Village, Samarinda. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using field research methods. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, involving converts, religious figures, and community leaders as information sources. Data validity was examined through triangulation, while data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that converts generally experience relatively positive social acceptance within the community, although some initially encounter rejection and disappointment from family members. Over time, family acceptance gradually develops as converts maintain family relationships while upholding their religious beliefs. Religious moderation is reflected in tolerance, national commitment, non-violence, and appreciation of local culture. This study demonstrates that religious identity negotiation is a gradual social process shaped by interpersonal interactions, respect for differences, and the preservation of family relationships.

Keywords: *Converts; Religious Identity Negotiation; Non-Muslim Families; Religious Moderation; Tolerance.*

INTRODUCTION

Religious conversion is not merely a change in an individual's religious affiliation but also a complex social process that involves identity transformation, interpersonal relationships, and cultural adaptation. Embracing a new religion may reshape how individuals understand themselves, negotiate their social positions, and maintain relationships with people who adhere to different religious beliefs. For Muslim converts, this transition may involve challenges in reconciling newly adopted religious commitments with pre-existing family relationships and cultural affiliations (Albina & Mukminin, 2025; Njine & Anthoney, 2025; Simonsohn, 2025). Religious conversion, therefore, needs to be understood not only as an individual spiritual experience but also as an ongoing process of social negotiation in which personal beliefs interact with

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family expectations, cultural traditions, and community relationships. Krotofil et al. (2023) conceptualize religious conversion as a dialogical transformation of the self, demonstrating that converts negotiate different internal and external social voices, including expectations, criticism, and acceptance from their surrounding environments. This perspective suggests that religious identity is continuously reconstructed through interactions with significant others rather than being determined solely by the formal adoption of a new religious affiliation.

Family relationships represent one of the most significant social contexts in which religious identity negotiation takes place. A decision to embrace Islam within a predominantly non-Muslim family may generate emotional tensions, changes in communication patterns, and different forms of acceptance or resistance. Roer-Strier et al. (2009), in their qualitative study of 17 African American family units, found that family members initially expressed diverse emotional reactions to women's conversion from Christianity to Islam. Over time, however, family responses tended to move toward greater respect and acceptance. Similarly, Ramahi & Suleiman (2017), examining female converts to Islam in Britain, introduced the concept of "intimate strangers" to explain how converts may remain emotionally connected to their families while experiencing differences in religious understanding and beliefs. These findings demonstrate that religious conversion does not necessarily eliminate family bonds, although it may transform the ways in which family members understand and relate to one another.

The negotiation of religious identity also involves the relationship between personal religious commitment and cultural belonging. Converts may seek to maintain their newly adopted religious practices while preserving meaningful social relationships and cultural attachments developed before conversion. Miglietta et al. (2024), in their qualitative study of first-generation Muslim parents in Italy, found that religious transmission and cultural adaptation involved ongoing negotiations between religious commitments and the demands of everyday life in a non-Muslim social environment. Their findings indicate that religious identity is not necessarily expressed through complete cultural separation but may develop through the negotiation of religious practices and social integration. In a related study, Krotofil et al. (2023) demonstrated that Polish women who converted to Islam actively negotiated their religious identities through interactions with different social expectations and cultural environments. Such negotiations could result in acceptance, compromise, rejection, or the reconsideration of personal positions. These studies highlight the importance of understanding converts as active social agents who negotiate religious identity while maintaining connections with their existing social environments.

Within religiously diverse societies, the relationship between religious identity and family belonging is closely connected to the broader principles of religious moderation and peaceful coexistence. Religious moderation in Indonesia provides a framework for understanding how individuals maintain religious commitments while respecting differences in belief, culture, and social practices. The framework is commonly articulated through four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). These dimensions provide an analytical perspective for examining how religious differences are managed in everyday social interactions. In this context, religious moderation should not be interpreted as weakening religious convictions or merging different religious doctrines. Rather, it concerns the ability to maintain one's religious identity while recognizing the rights, dignity, and beliefs of others. Hermawan & Matas (2023) demonstrate that religious moderation plays an important role in shaping interfaith relationships through social engagement, tolerance, and respect for religious diversity. Furthermore, recent research by Gede Agung et al. (2024) identifies local wisdom as an important form of social capital that supports interfaith communication and harmonious relationships within Indonesian communities. Their findings indicate that shared cultural values, community traditions, and the involvement of local leaders can facilitate coexistence among people with different religious affiliations.

Despite these contributions, religious conversion in indigenous communities may involve additional challenges because religious affiliation is often closely associated with ethnic identity, family traditions, and cultural belonging. Abdullah et al. (2022), in a study of female converts in Buntu Pepasan, North Toraja, found that conversion to Islam could generate social stigma, identity conflicts, and challenges related to family expectations. Nevertheless, the converts demonstrated resilience in maintaining their religious commitments while navigating their social environments. A particularly relevant study was conducted by (Masri et al., 2025), who examined the religious challenges experienced by Dayak Muslim converts in the Indonesia–Malaysia border region. Their findings indicate that Dayak converts encounter cultural, social, and spiritual challenges associated with their minority position and the persistence of customary traditions. The study emphasizes the importance of contextual religious guidance that takes indigenous cultural backgrounds into consideration. These findings demonstrate that religious conversion among indigenous communities cannot be separated from the broader relationship between religious identity, customary traditions, and social belonging.

The relationship between indigenous cultural identity and religious diversity is also reflected in studies of local wisdom and interfaith communication. Gede Agung et al. (2024) found that local wisdom functions as cultural and social capital in facilitating harmonious interactions among Muslim, Hindu, and Christian communities in Malang, Indonesia. Their findings emphasize the contribution of shared ancestral narratives, cultural events, and community leadership to the maintenance of interfaith relationships. In addition, Sulaiman et al. (2025), examining Chinese Muslim converts in Indonesia, found that apparent social harmony does not necessarily eliminate underlying family tensions, stigma, suspicion, and social exclusion. Their findings reveal that family and community negotiations may reduce overt conflict while leaving unresolved tensions in everyday relationships. These studies suggest that religious coexistence should not be understood solely through the absence of visible conflict; it is also necessary to examine how individuals experience acceptance, negotiate differences, and maintain social belonging within their families and communities.

Pampang Cultural Village in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, provides a relevant setting for examining these dynamics within the Dayak Kenyah community. The cultural context of Pampang is characterized by the continuing significance of indigenous traditions, customary values, and collective social relationships. The interaction between religious affiliation and cultural belonging

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becomes particularly important when individuals adopt religious identities that differ from those of their family members. For Muslim converts, this situation may involve maintaining Islamic religious commitments while continuing to participate in family and community relationships shaped by the cultural traditions of the Dayak Kenyah community. The research findings in this study indicate that the social acceptance experienced by converts in the broader community is not always identical to the responses they initially receive from their families. Some family members initially expressed surprise, disappointment, or resistance following the conversion. Nevertheless, family relationships gradually developed toward greater acceptance as converts maintained communication and continued to preserve their familial bonds without abandoning their newly adopted religious beliefs. This situation illustrates the complex relationship between individual religious autonomy, family acceptance, and cultural belonging.

Previous studies have made important contributions to understanding religious conversion, family responses, indigenous identity, and interfaith harmony. However, several aspects remain insufficiently explored. Research by Roer-Strier et al. (2009) and Ramahi & Suleiman (2017) primarily examined family responses and interpersonal relationships following conversion to Islam, while Sulaiman et al. (2025) highlighted conflict and social exclusion among Chinese Muslim converts in Indonesia. Studies by Abdullah et al. (2022) and Masri et al. (2025) expanded this discussion by examining the challenges experienced by converts in indigenous communities, particularly in Toraja and Dayak contexts. Meanwhile, Gede Agung et al. (2024) and Hermawan & Matas (2023) addressed local wisdom and religious moderation in promoting interfaith harmony. Nevertheless, the intersection of religious identity negotiation, family acceptance, and religious moderation among Muslim converts within the Dayak Kenyah cultural setting of Pampang, Samarinda, remains an area that requires further empirical investigation. In particular, there is a need to understand how converts maintain their Islamic religious commitments while negotiating relationships with non-Muslim family members and sustaining their cultural and social belonging.

The novelty of this study lies in its contextual and empirical examination of religious identity negotiation at the intersection of individual religious commitment, non-Muslim family relationships, and indigenous cultural belonging within the Dayak Kenyah community. Rather than treating religious conversion solely as an individual transformation or examining religious moderation only at the broader community level, this study explores how religious differences are negotiated within everyday family relationships. Religious moderation is employed as an analytical perspective to understand the ways in which converts maintain their religious convictions while practicing tolerance, respecting differences, and sustaining family and cultural relationships. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the negotiation of religious identity among Muslim converts in their relationships with non-Muslim family members and to examine the manifestations of religious moderation in Cultural Village in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a field research design to understand the experiences, perspectives, and social dynamics encountered by converts to Islam (*mualaf*) as they negotiate their religious identity within non-Muslim family environments. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on how individuals interpret their own experiences, their social interactions, and the processes of accepting and adjusting to a religious identity within the context of daily life. According to Busetto et al. (2020), qualitative research is well-suited for understanding complex social phenomena, particularly when the research seeks to explore the experiences, viewpoints, and underlying reasons for individual behavior within a specific context.

A field research design enables the researcher to obtain information directly from informants and to observe the social context in which the phenomenon occurs. In this study, this approach is used to understand how converts maintain their Islamic faith, establish communication with non-Muslim family members, and navigate social relationships within the Dayak Kenyah community. The analysis focuses on the experiences and interpretations of the informants, rather than on quantitatively measuring their level of religious moderation.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in the Pampang Cultural Village, located in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. This site was selected because its community possesses a Dayak Kenyah cultural background, with a social life that reflects the interplay between local traditions, community identity, and religious diversity. This context is highly relevant for examining how converts maintain their religious identity while simultaneously preserving relationships with their families and the broader social environment settings where others may hold different religious beliefs.

The primary subjects of this study are converts to Islam residing in the Pampang Cultural Village. Additional informants include religious and community leaders who possess knowledge regarding the social life and interreligious relations within the area. The selection of informants was focused on individuals with direct experience or knowledge concerning the phenomenon under investigation. The strategy of purposive informant selection is relevant in qualitative research because it enables the researcher to obtain rich information that aligns with the research focus (Bouncken et al., 2026).

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained directly through interviews and observations of informants and the social environment under study. Secondary data are gathered from documents and archival materials related to the community's way of life, cultural traditions, religious activities, and the research context.

Data collection is carried out using the following three techniques:

1. Interviews

Interviews are used to gather information regarding experiences of religious conversion, family responses to the decision to become Muslim, the process of familial acceptance, strategies for maintaining kinship ties, and the experience of living out one's

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religious identity within the community. Interviews are also conducted with religious and community leaders to gain supporting perspectives on social relations and practices of tolerance in the Pampang Cultural Village.

2. Observation

Observation is employed to gain an overview of the community's social life and religious practices, including interactions among residents from different religious backgrounds and the involvement of converts in local cultural activities. Observations are focused on social situations relevant to the research objectives. The findings from these observations are used to supplement and cross-reference information obtained through interviews.

3. Documentation

Documentation serves as a source of supporting data, involving the collection of photographs, official documents, and written materials related to religious activities, traditional customs, and the social life of the Pampang Cultural Village community. Documentation helps provide an empirical context for the information gathered through interviews and observations.

The use of interviews, observations, and documentation allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon from various sources of information. Furthermore, combining multiple data collection techniques supports the process of triangulation in qualitative research (Busetto et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which encompasses data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The analysis process was conducted as follows:

1. Data Condensation

Data condensation was carried out through the selection, focusing, simplification, and organization of information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Information relevant to the research focus was categorized by theme such as experiences of religious conversion, family responses, social acceptance, the maintenance of familial relationships, and practices of religious moderation.

2. Data Display

The condensed data were presented through narrative descriptions, thematic groupings, and excerpts from informants' statements. This display served to illustrate the relationships between the individual experiences of converts, family responses, and the socio-cultural context of the community. This stage also assisted the researcher in identifying similarities and differences in experiences among the informants.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns and relationships among the identified themes. These conclusions were then verified by cross-referencing the findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure alignment with empirical evidence. This process was iterative throughout the analysis to ensure that the resulting interpretations remained grounded in the research data.

This analytical model enabled the researcher to develop a systematic understanding moving from field data toward an interpretation of how converts negotiate their religious identity (Miles et al., 2014).

Data Trustworthiness

The validity of the data was assessed through triangulation, which involves comparing information obtained from various sources and data collection techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing accounts from converts, religious leaders, and community figures. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was performed by comparing information gathered through interviews with findings from observations and documentation. This examination aims to identify consistencies, discrepancies, and potential inconsistencies in the information, ensuring that research interpretations are not based solely on a single informant's account. Busetto et al. (2020) explain that employing multiple sources and data collection techniques can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Thus, triangulation is used to strengthen the credibility of the interpretations and the alignment of the findings with the empirical conditions of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Research concerning religious conversion and interfaith family relationships involves sensitive personal experiences. Consequently, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities and respecting their personal experiences remained a priority throughout the entire research process. The use of informants' names in any publication is contingent upon their explicit consent; otherwise, identities are anonymized and not publicly disclosed. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, following a full explanation of the research objectives and how the data would be used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

1. Family Response to a Convert's Change of Religion

The research findings indicate that an individual's decision to embrace Islam elicits varied responses from their family. In the initial stages of conversion, some family members may express shock, disappointment, or even outright rejection of the decision. These reactions stem from differences in belief systems and concerns regarding the potential shifts in the individual's social environment following their transition to Islam.

One informant described this experience as a difficult process, particularly when having to learn religious practices that were previously unfamiliar, while also facing a lack of support from those closest to them.

"Honestly, there were many challenges. From learning how to perform *salah* (prayer) the movements were completely new to me to feeling isolated because not everyone around me understood my decision. There were even moments when I felt confused, afraid of making mistakes, worried about being rejected by my family, and anxious about whether I could truly be a 'proper' Muslim." (P1, interview)

This statement illustrates that the process of becoming a convert involves not only learning the teachings and practices of Islam but also navigating emotional experiences such as loneliness, confusion, and apprehension regarding family acceptance. Such

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experiences highlight the challenges of reconciling a new religious identity with pre-existing social relationships.

Another informant revealed that the decision to embrace Islam initially caused shock and deep disappointment within their family. However, the family's response evolved over time, especially as they observed positive changes in the individual's daily behavior.

"My family was shocked; some were even deeply disappointed. They assumed I had been unduly influenced or was simply going through a rebellious phase. But over time, as they saw me become a calmer and better person, they began to accept it. Although not everyone is fully supportive even now, I continue to strive to maintain good relationships with them." (P2, interview)

These findings suggest that family acceptance occurs gradually and does not necessarily happen simultaneously across all family members. Changes in family responses are also linked to the efforts of converts to maintain communication and familial bonds, despite differences in religious belief.

2. Negotiating Religious Identity and Maintaining Family Relationships

The process of negotiating religious identity in this study is reflected in the efforts of converts to uphold their Islamic faith while simultaneously preserving relationships with family members of different faiths. The decision to become a Muslim does not automatically lead to the severance of family ties. On the contrary, converts continue to strive to maintain good relationships with their families, even when initially met with unsupportive responses.

Based on interview findings, some families require time to understand and accept a family member's change in faith. Throughout this process, converts face situations that necessitate adapting to their family's reactions without abandoning the faith they have chosen.

The research findings reveal two types of dynamics within the process of identity negotiation. First, there is the effort to remain committed to Islam, despite concerns regarding potential rejection by the family. Second, there is the endeavor to sustain interpersonal relationships through communication and daily conduct that can help rebuild the family's trust.

Thus, the negotiation of religious identity concerns not only the acceptance of a new Muslim identity but also the effort to ensure the continuity of family relationships amidst differences in belief.

3. Community Acceptance and Interreligious Life

In contrast to the initial reactions often encountered within the family sphere, research findings indicate that community acceptance of converts (*mualaf*) in the Pampang Cultural Village is generally quite positive. Differences in religion do not automatically serve as a barrier to maintaining social relationships and communal life.

The community tends to view the choice of religion as a personal decision for each individual. This attitude is reflected in daily social interactions, which continue without discriminatory treatment toward residents who follow a different faith.

Observations and interviews documented in the research also reveal a respect for differences in belief within the community. Converts continue to engage in social activities within their neighborhoods and generally do not face ostracization as a result of their religious conversion.

These findings highlight a difference in the dynamics of acceptance between the family environment and the broader community. Within the family, the process of acceptance may involve stages of shock, disappointment, and eventual adjustment. In the wider community, however, differences in belief are more readily accepted as a natural part of a diverse social life.

4. Religious Practices and Accommodation of Local Culture

The research indicates that converts maintain a connection to the traditions and culture of the Dayak people in the Pampang Cultural Village. Converting to another religion does not automatically sever their involvement in social and cultural activities passed down through generations.

Participation in local cultural activities demonstrates that religious identity and cultural identity can be maintained side by side. Converts continue to value community traditions and take part in customary events, while observing boundaries they believe to be consistent with the teachings of Islam.

One such form of adjustment is seen in how converts participate in customary activities specifically when these involve food or drink that may not align with Islamic religious requirements. In such instances, converts continue to show respect for the cultural event while making necessary adjustments regarding what they consume. These findings indicate that the relationship between religion and local culture is not necessarily manifested through the unconditional acceptance of all traditional practices. Instead, there is a process of adjustment that allows converts to continue valuing their cultural heritage while upholding the religious principles they have embraced.

5. Factors Facilitating and Hindering the Negotiation of Religious Identity

Based on the research results, several factors influence the process by which converts negotiate their religious identity within the context of their relationships with non-Muslim family members.

Facilitating factors are primarily evident in social acceptance, mutual respect, the opportunity to maintain familial bonds, and the presence of a social environment that is relatively open to religious diversity. Such conditions provide space for converts to practice their Islamic faith without having to sever the social and cultural ties they had previously established.

Conversely, hindering factors tend to emerge during the initial stages of conversion. Concerns regarding rejection by family, a limited understanding of new religious practices, feelings of isolation, and the disappointment felt by some family members pose challenges to the process of identity adjustment.

Interviews reveal that family rejection is not always permanent. Over time, some family members may begin to show acceptance after observing changes in the convert's behavior and way of life. Nevertheless, such acceptance is not necessarily uniform across all family members.

Overall, the research findings demonstrate that the process of negotiating religious identity among converts in the Pampang Cultural Village unfolds through the dynamics of family relationships, social acceptance, and adjustments to local cultural

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traditions. These three aspects illustrate that a change in faith is not merely a matter of an individual's spiritual life; it also entails the ongoing maintenance of social relationships and cultural identity.

Table 1: Summary table of research findings

Tema	Temuan utama	Bukti empiris
Family response	Shock, disappointment, and gradual acceptance	Interviews P1 and P2
Identity negotiation	Upholding Islam while maintaining family ties	Interviews and analysis results
Public acceptance	Social acceptance is relatively good, and there is generally no exclusion.	Interviews P3 and observation
Cultural accommodation	Continue participating in traditional customs, subject to religious boundaries.	Observation and documentation
Supporting and hindering factors	Societal tolerance is supportive; family opposition and personal concerns are hindrances.	Interview P4 and P5

B. Discussion

1. Family Responses to Religious Conversion: Between Initial Resistance and Gradual Acceptance

The findings reveal that religious conversion among Muslim converts in Desa Budaya Pampang generated different responses within their families. Initial reactions included surprise, disappointment, concern, and fear of losing previously established family relationships. Nevertheless, these responses did not necessarily develop into permanent rejection. Over time, some family members demonstrated greater acceptance after observing changes in the converts' everyday behaviour and their continued efforts to maintain family relationships. This finding suggests that family acceptance is a gradual relational process rather than an immediate consequence of an individual's decision to embrace a new religion.

This pattern can be understood through the perspective of religious conversion as a relational transformation. Conversion changes not only an individual's religious affiliation but also the expectations, interpretations, and interaction patterns shared with significant others. Bourjolly et al. (2013), in their study of African American women who converted from Christianity to Islam, identified diverse initial emotional reactions among family members, followed by changes that predominantly moved toward greater respect and acceptance. A similar dynamic appears in the Pampang context, where initial disappointment among some family members gradually developed into a more accepting attitude. The similarity suggests that family responses to conversion may involve a process of adjustment in which family members gradually reinterpret the meaning and consequences of the convert's religious decision.

However, the findings also require a more nuanced interpretation. Ramahi & Suleiman (2017) introduced the concept of "intimate strangers" to explain how religious converts may remain emotionally connected to their families while experiencing differences in religious understanding and beliefs. Their research demonstrates that emotional closeness does not necessarily eliminate differences in religious perspectives. This distinction is relevant to the Pampang findings because some family members have begun to accept the converts, although not all have provided full support. Thus, acceptance should not automatically be interpreted as complete agreement with the religious decision.

The findings also resonate with Mahfud (2018); Sulaiman et al. (2025) Muzakki (2010), who demonstrate that apparently harmonious relationships following religious conversion may continue to contain suspicion, discomfort, and unresolved tensions. Their study of Chinese Muslim converts in Indonesia shows that negotiation within families and communities does not always eliminate underlying contradictions. Compared with their findings, the Pampang case indicates a relatively more positive pattern of social adjustment, although the available evidence does not establish that all family tensions have been resolved. This comparison is important because it prevents the assumption that visible harmony necessarily represents complete emotional reconciliation.

The synthesis of these findings indicates that family acceptance among converts in Pampang operates through a gradual process of relational adjustment. Three interconnected elements are visible: the family's initial emotional response, the convert's continued commitment to the new religious identity, and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships through everyday interaction. The convert's efforts to preserve family communication appear important in this process, although the present data do not establish that behavioural changes alone cause family acceptance. Theoretically, this finding positions family acceptance as a negotiated outcome shaped by the interaction between individual religious agency and family relationships.

2. Negotiating Religious Identity: Maintaining Islamic Commitment without Severing Family Ties

The second finding concerns the efforts of Muslim converts to maintain their Islamic identity while preserving relationships with non-Muslim family members. The findings show that becoming Muslim does not necessarily lead converts to withdraw from their previous family relationships. Instead, they continue to seek ways to maintain familial communication and social bonds while adhering to their newly adopted religious commitments. This process illustrates that religious identity negotiation involves balancing personal conviction with relational continuity.

Identity negotiation theory provides a useful perspective for understanding this phenomenon. Ting-Toomey (2017); Dai & Chen (2025); Fariza et al. (2026) explains that identity negotiation occurs through interaction in which individuals seek recognition of their identities while responding to the identities and expectations of others. From this perspective, the converts in Pampang can be understood as individuals who seek to maintain recognition of their Muslim identity without rejecting the familial identities and relationships that existed before conversion. Their position is therefore not simply a choice between religious commitment and family belonging. Rather, it involves managing both dimensions within everyday relationships.

The concept of religious conversion as a dialogical transformation also helps explain this process. Krotofil et al. (2023); Górak-Sosnowska (2015) demonstrate that Polish women who converted to Islam negotiated their identities through interactions between personal religious convictions and different social expectations. Their findings highlight that religious identity develops through ongoing encounters with internal beliefs and external social

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responses. In the Pampang context, this negotiation is reflected in the converts' efforts to maintain Islamic commitments while continuing to communicate and establish positive relationships with family members who hold different religious beliefs.

The concept of "intimate strangers" proposed by (Ramahi & Suleiman, 2017) further explains the coexistence of emotional closeness and religious difference. Their study indicates that family members may continue to maintain emotional connections with converts even when they do not fully understand or agree with their religious choices. The Pampang findings extend this discussion by highlighting the converts' active efforts to preserve familial relationships during the process of religious adjustment. Rather than interpreting conversion as a complete separation from their previous social environment, the findings suggest that converts seek to construct a form of belonging in which religious commitment and family relationships can coexist (Naldo et al., 2026; Husbye Hansen & Lindhardt, 2023).

An important analytical distinction is necessary here. Maintaining family relationships does not mean that converts compromise their fundamental religious beliefs. Likewise, preserving Islamic commitments does not necessarily require rejecting family members who follow different religions (Hasan, 2023; Thalgi et al. 2026). The findings therefore suggest that religious identity negotiation involves the management of boundaries: boundaries that protect religious commitments while allowing continued social interaction and emotional relationships.

The synthesis of this theme indicates that identity negotiation in Pampang can be understood through the interaction of religious continuity, relational adaptation, and social recognition. Converts maintain their religious commitments while attempting to sustain relationships with non-Muslim family members. This finding contributes to religious identity studies by demonstrating that the continuity of family belonging can remain important even after a significant transformation in religious affiliation. However, because the available interviews provide limited direct descriptions of specific negotiation strategies, further interpretation of particular practices should remain grounded in additional interview evidence.

3. Community Acceptance and Interfaith Coexistence: The Difference between Family and Community Responses

The findings indicate that Muslim converts generally experience relatively positive acceptance within the wider community of Desa Budaya Pampang. Religious differences do not automatically prevent individuals from participating in everyday social interactions. Converts continue to live within their social environment, maintain relationships with other residents, and participate in community life without general social exclusion being reported in the research. This situation contrasts with the initial responses experienced by some converts within their families.

The distinction between family-level and community-level acceptance is analytically significant. Family relationships are often characterized by emotional intimacy, shared histories, expectations, and established religious traditions. Consequently, religious conversion may challenge deeply embedded understandings of family identity. Community relationships, in contrast, may be organized around everyday cooperation, neighbourhood interactions, and shared cultural activities. These differences in relational contexts may help explain why acceptance within the broader community can develop differently from acceptance within the immediate family.

The concept of social capital offers a useful perspective for interpreting this finding. Gede Agung et al. (2024); Purwito et al. (2026); Supriyatno (2018) drawing on Bourdieu's social capital theory, demonstrate that local wisdom and shared cultural inheritance can facilitate interfaith communication and harmonious coexistence in Malang, Indonesia. Their study highlights the contribution of community leaders and cultural activities in maintaining positive relationships among religious groups. A comparable pattern is visible in Pampang, where shared community life and respect for individual religious choices appear to provide a social environment in which converts can continue participating in everyday interactions.

Nevertheless, positive community acceptance should not be interpreted as evidence that all forms of religious tension have disappeared. Sulaiman et al. (2025); Xu et al. (2025); Hou et al. (2026) demonstrate that statements of acceptance may coexist with less visible forms of stigma, distrust, and social exclusion. Their findings challenge the tendency to equate the absence of open conflict with substantive interfaith harmony. This perspective is important when interpreting the Pampang case because the research findings indicate relatively positive community responses but do not provide sufficient evidence to establish the complete absence of subtle discrimination or unexpressed tensions.

The difference between family and community responses can therefore be interpreted as evidence that religious acceptance is context-dependent. Individuals may experience different forms of recognition and adjustment depending on the social relationships in which religious differences emerge. Family acceptance involves the renegotiation of intimate and historically established relationships, whereas community acceptance may be facilitated by shared social practices and local norms of coexistence.

The synthesis of this theme indicates that community acceptance and family acceptance represent two interconnected but distinct dimensions of social integration. Positive community relations may provide a supportive environment for converts, but they do not necessarily resolve tensions within the family. The Pampang findings therefore contribute to interfaith relations research by demonstrating the importance of examining religious coexistence at multiple social levels rather than treating community harmony as a uniform condition.

4. Religious Identity and Cultural Accommodation: Maintaining Dayak Kenyah Cultural Belonging

Another important finding concerns the continued participation of Muslim converts in local cultural activities while maintaining Islamic religious commitments. The findings indicate that conversion to Islam does not necessarily eliminate their connection to Dayak cultural traditions. Converts continue to respect and participate in customary activities while making adjustments when particular practices conflict with their religious beliefs, especially concerning food and drink prohibited in Islam.

This finding illustrates the distinction between religious identity and cultural belonging. Although religious conversion may transform an individual's theological commitments and everyday practices, it does not automatically eliminate the social and cultural relationships established before conversion. In indigenous communities, cultural belonging is often embedded in kinship,

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collective memory, customary activities, and participation in community life. Consequently, religious conversion may require individuals to negotiate the boundaries between religious obligations and cultural practices rather than abandon one identity in favour of another.

The relationship between Islamic identity and Dayak cultural identity has also been discussed by Halim et al. (2021); Fadani & Alfarisi (2024), who examined cultural interrelations between Dayak indigenous culture and Islam. Their research provides an important contextual foundation for understanding how Islamic identity may develop within Dayak cultural settings. Similarly, Masri et al. (2025); Dewantara et al. (2026), in their study of Dayak Muslim converts in Jagoi Village along the Indonesia–Malaysia border, identified cultural, social, and spiritual challenges associated with conversion, including limited religious knowledge, insufficient religious guidance, and the persistence of customary traditions. Their findings demonstrate that indigenous converts may need context-sensitive religious guidance to navigate the relationship between Islamic commitments and inherited cultural practices.

The Pampang findings reveal a related but distinct dimension. While Masri et al. (2025) emphasize the religious challenges and guidance needs of Dayak converts in a borderland community, the present study highlights continued cultural participation and selective adjustment of practices in an indigenous tourism and cultural village. Converts' participation in customary activities, combined with their observance of Islamic dietary restrictions, suggests that cultural continuity does not necessarily require the uncritical acceptance of every customary practice. Instead, individuals may distinguish between cultural participation that remains compatible with their religious commitments and specific practices that require adjustment.

Gede Agung et al. (2024) further demonstrate that local wisdom can function as cultural capital in maintaining harmonious relationships among different religious communities. This perspective helps explain why participation in shared cultural activities may support social belonging even when individuals maintain different religious affiliations. In Pampang, cultural participation can therefore be interpreted as a means of sustaining social connections rather than simply expressing adherence to customary traditions.

The synthesis of these findings suggests that cultural accommodation among Muslim converts involves selective participation rather than cultural assimilation or complete cultural separation. Converts maintain their connection to Dayak cultural life while establishing boundaries consistent with Islamic religious commitments. This finding contributes to discussions of indigenous religious identity by showing that conversion may produce a negotiated form of belonging in which religious and cultural identities remain interconnected without necessarily being identical.

5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: Religious Moderation as an Everyday Relational Practice

The final theme concerns the factors that support or inhibit the negotiation of religious identity among Muslim converts. The findings identify social acceptance, respect for religious differences, and the possibility of maintaining family relationships as supporting conditions. Conversely, initial family rejection, emotional uncertainty, limited knowledge of Islamic practices, and fear of social disapproval represent challenges experienced during the conversion process.

These findings indicate that religious identity negotiation is influenced not only by individual conviction but also by the availability of supportive social relationships and opportunities for religious learning. The experience of feeling alone, uncertainty about performing religious practices correctly, and fear of family rejection illustrates the vulnerability that may accompany the early stages of conversion. Such challenges are not necessarily resolved through the formal adoption of a new religious affiliation; they may require continuing interpersonal support and opportunities to develop religious understanding.

Masri et al. (2025); Sukman & Bustami (2025); Astari et al. (2025); Fadani & Alfarisi (2024) identified limited Islamic knowledge, inadequate religious mentoring, restricted access to digital religious resources, and insufficient understanding of religious moderation as challenges experienced by Dayak Muslim converts in the Indonesia–Malaysia border region. These findings reinforce the importance of contextual religious support for indigenous converts. (Jailani, 2026) similarly demonstrate that Muslim identity reconstruction develops through religious learning, social interaction, and support from significant others and religious communities. Their findings indicate that social support can reduce isolation and facilitate the development of a more confident religious identity.

Within the Pampang context, religious moderation provides an analytical framework for understanding how religious commitments can coexist with respect for different beliefs and cultural traditions. The four indicators commonly used in Indonesia's religious moderation framework national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture can help interpret the social practices identified in the research. Tolerance is reflected in respect for individual religious choices and continued social interaction. The absence of reported religiously motivated violence in the observed research context is consistent with a peaceful pattern of coexistence, although it should not be interpreted as proof that all forms of tension are absent. Accommodation of local culture is reflected in the converts' continued participation in customary activities while maintaining religious boundaries.

The concept of religious moderation should nevertheless be applied analytically rather than normatively. The presence of harmonious interactions does not automatically demonstrate that every dimension of religious moderation has been fully realized. For example, the findings provide evidence concerning tolerance and cultural accommodation, but more specific empirical evidence is needed to evaluate national commitment and non-violence as distinct dimensions. This distinction is important to avoid treating the four indicators as predetermined conclusions rather than analytical categories that must be supported by field evidence.

The synthesis of this theme indicates that the negotiation of religious identity is shaped by the interaction between personal religious commitment, social acceptance, religious learning, and cultural accommodation. Supportive community environments can create opportunities for converts to maintain their religious identities and social relationships, while family resistance and limited religious knowledge may complicate the process. Religious moderation, in this context, is best understood as an everyday

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relational practice through which differences are managed without requiring the elimination of individual religious commitments.

6. Overall Synthesis: Religious Identity Negotiation as a Relational and Culturally Embedded Process

The five research themes indicate that the negotiation of religious identity among converts in the Pampang Cultural Village is a process that is relational, gradual, and contextual. This process unfolds through the interplay between an individual's religious commitment, the responses of their family, acceptance by the community, and their continued attachment to local cultural traditions. A change in religion does not automatically sever familial ties or erase previously established cultural identities. Instead, converts strive to uphold their Islamic faith while simultaneously maintaining social relationships through communication, mutual respect, and adjustments in their daily lives.

Theoretically, these findings expand the application of Identity Negotiation Theory by demonstrating that identity negotiation in the context of religious conversion occurs not only between an individual and the broader social environment but also within family relationships—bonds characterized by deep emotional connections and a shared history. Social Identity Theory helps explain that a new religious identity does not necessarily replace an individual's entire social and cultural identity. Meanwhile, the perspective of social capital suggests that community ties and local wisdom can provide a space for sustained interfaith interaction.

From the perspective of religious moderation, the experiences of converts in Pampang highlight the relevance of tolerance and cultural accommodation in everyday life. However, religious moderation in this study cannot be inferred solely from the absence of open conflict. The fact that family acceptance is not yet uniform suggests that social harmony involves ongoing processes of adjustment and dynamics that require a deeper understanding.

Thus, the primary contribution of this research is to demonstrate that the negotiation of religious identity among converts within an indigenous community does not inevitably involve a conflict between religion and culture. Rather, this process can take place through the maintenance of religious commitment, the preservation of family relationships, and selective participation in local traditions. These findings provide a contextual perspective on how religious identity, interfaith family relationships, and cultural ties can be negotiated within a pluralistic society.

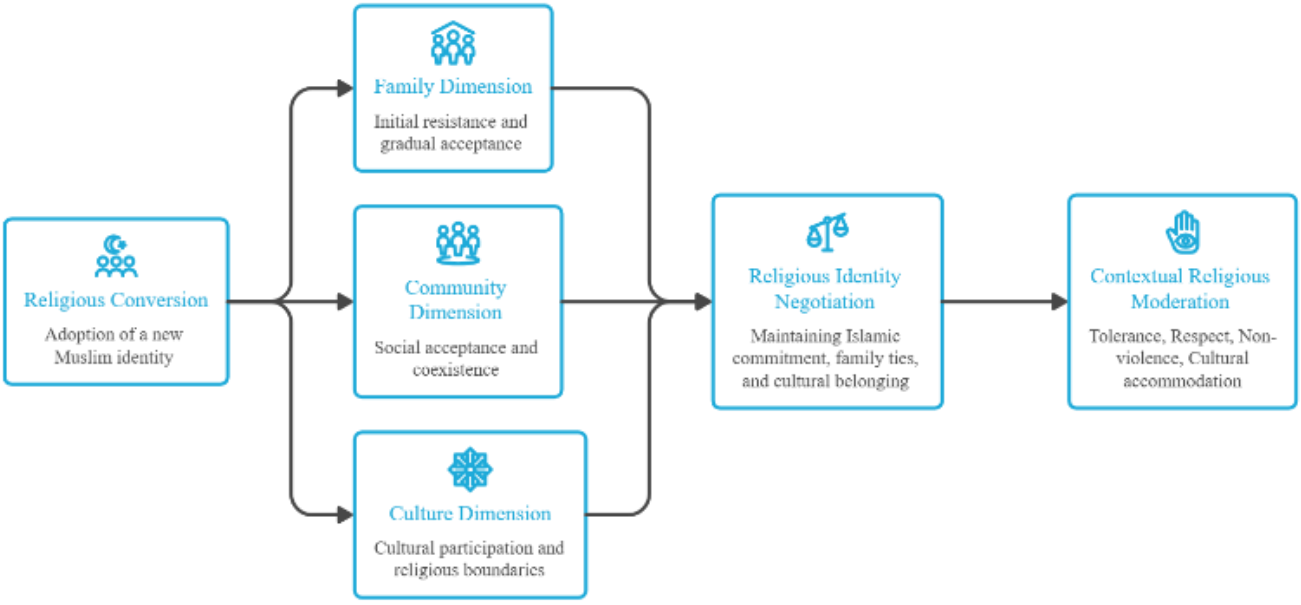


Figure 1. Analytical synthesis of religious identity negotiation among Muslim converts in Pampang Cultural Village

Based on this model, the negotiation of religious identity among converts can be understood as a relational and cultural process that unfolds through the interplay between an individual's religious commitment, the continuity of family relationships, and their attachment to local culture. These three dimensions demonstrate that maintaining a Muslim identity does not necessarily require an individual to sever pre-existing social and cultural ties. Within the context of the Dayak Kenyah indigenous community in the Pampang Cultural Village, this process highlights the significance of communication, acceptance, tolerance, and cultural adjustment in managing differences in belief. Consequently, this model offers an emerging analytical framework for understanding the negotiation of religious identity within interfaith families and indigenous communities, while also creating space for future research to examine and further develop the relationships between these dimensions across different socio-cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the negotiation of religious identity among converts in the Pampang Cultural Village, Samarinda, is a gradual social process shaped by the interplay between individual religious commitment, family relations, community acceptance, and ties to local culture. The decision to embrace Islam initially elicited reactions of shock, disappointment, and rejection from some family members. Over time, however, acceptance began to emerge as the converts maintained communication and familial bonds without abandoning their chosen faith. These findings reveal that social acceptance within the broader community does not always align with acceptance within the family.

Furthermore, the study finds that individuals can maintain their connection to Dayak Kenyah culture following their conversion by participating in social and cultural activities, while remaining

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mindful of the religious principles they have adopted. In this context, religious moderation is reflected primarily through respect for differences in belief, the preservation of social relationships, and the accommodation of local culture. These findings suggest that religious identity and cultural identity are not necessarily in conflict; rather, they can be negotiated through communication, adjustment, and respect for differences.

Conceptually, this study offers an emerging analytical framework that identifies family, community, and cultural ties as critical dimensions for understanding how converts negotiate their religious identity within an indigenous society. This framework broadens the understanding of religious conversion, framing it not merely as a shift in individual belief, but also as a process of sustaining social relationships and cultural identity. Nevertheless, these findings are context-specific and cannot yet be used to establish causal relationships between these dimensions. Future research is advised to involve a more diverse range of informants, explore the experiences of non-Muslim family members firsthand, and compare the dynamics of identity negotiation within indigenous communities and other multi-religious settings.

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