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Negotiating Islamic Law and Religious Tolerance in Mixed-Marriage Families in South Korea

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Abstract:

The dynamics of mixed-marriage families between Muslims and non-Muslims in South Korea illustrate how Islamic legal principles are negotiated within a multicultural and minority context. This study examines how Indonesian–Korean families practice and reinterpret Islamic law by integrating Social Construction Theory and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework. This research employs a socio-juridical qualitative design supported by demographic statistics on Indonesian migrants and intermarriages from Korean government sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires with ten purposively selected Indonesian Muslim–Korean couples, while some other data were gathered from the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) and the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (IMUSKA), both playing a central role in community support and religious education. Data were analysed in three stages: reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing, to obtain a thematic interpretation that integrates social and legal dimensions. The findings reveal diverse strategies among Muslim spouses in balancing religious obligations with tolerance toward non-Muslim partners and families. Some maintain strict adherence to Islamic prohibitions, while others accommodate local cultural practices such as communal dining or social gatherings involving alcohol, interpreting these as expressions of respect and family harmony rather than religious neglect. These negotiations demonstrate that tolerance within mixed-marriage families is an active,

socially constructed process shaped by daily interaction, cultural adaptation, and pragmatic decision-making. From the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* perspective, such practices can be understood as preserving core objectives of Islamic law—*ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of faith), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (family and lineage), and *ḥifẓ al-ijtima'* (social harmony). This research contributes to broader discussions on Islamic law, interfaith relations, and the lived experiences of Muslim minorities, highlighting how Islamic legal principles operate dynamically within non-Muslim communities.

Keywords: Islamic law; mixed marriage; South Korea.

Introduction

International and cross-border marriages have become a significant phenomenon in South Korea over the past two decades. The rise of globalisation, labour migration, and cultural exchange has led to increasing numbers of foreign nationals, particularly from Southeast Asia, entering South Korea through marriage migration programmes.¹ Indonesians, although not the largest group, have gradually formed a visible community through marriage ties and labour mobility. Official statistics record a steady increase in international marriages, which has contributed to the emergence of multicultural families and reshaped the demographic and culture of South Korean society.² Within these new family structures, the presence of Muslims—both as migrants and spouses—exacerbates existing issues of cultural integration, legal adaptation, and religious coexistence.³

For Muslim spouses, besides being a personal relationship, marriage is a religiously regulated institution embedded in the broader framework of *fiqh al-usrah* (Islamic family jurisprudence).⁴ Islamic marriage is ideally guided by faith, equality, mutual respect, consultation, and compassion, and is expected to foster *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* (peace, affection, and mercy).⁵ However, when such

¹ Hye-Kyung Lee, "International Marriage and the State in South Korea: Focusing on Governmental Policy," *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 1 (2008): 107–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020701794240>.

² Naomi Chi, "Walking in Her Shoes": Prospects and Challenges of Marriage Migrants in South Korea," *年報 公共政策学* 13 (2019): 83–97.

³ Lee Yun Jung, "A Study on Korean Life and Culture Adaptation of Muslim International Students in Seoul," *The Korean Society of Community Living Science* 34, no. 2 (2023): 289–311.

⁴ Norcahyono Norcahyono et al., "Reconstructing the Philosophy of Marriage: Banjar Wedding Rituals as Cultural Implementation of Maqashid al-Nikah in Achieving Spiritual Sanctity and Social Harmony," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 24, no. 2 (2024): 393–410, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v24i2.15617>; Imron Rosyadi et al., "Realizing Post-Disaster Sakinah Families: Analysis of the Resilience of Semeru Eruption Survivors' Families at the Relocation Site from the Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah Perspective," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (2024): 878–902, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.22560>.

⁵ Zulkarnain Yani et al., "Togetherness and Union between Husband and Wife in Equal Relationship in the Thought of Azhary Imam Palembang in Hadiyah An-Nisa Manuscripts," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2508606, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2508606>; Iwan et al., "Reconceptualizing the Marriage Age Limit in Indonesia: Efforts to Strengthen Family Resilience in North Sumatra," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, June 28, 2024, 161–78, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v18i1.11090>; Nasrulloh Nasrulloh et al., "Understanding of the Hadith, Marriage Age and the Islamic Law: Study of Regent's Regulations in Bojonegoro, East Java," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024): 998–1022, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.19567>; Wardatun Nabilah et al., "Between Protection and Permissiveness: A Fiqh Siyasah Reexamination of Marriage Dispensation in Indonesia," *JURIS*



marriages occur in non-Muslim societies like South Korea, couples are often faced with structural and practical challenges. On one hand, they must navigate the normative tension between Islamic legal requirements and South Korea's secular family law framework. On the other hand, they face the everyday reality of reconciling differences in religion, culture, and lifestyle between spouses and their extended families. This includes decisions about food and drink consumption, participation in social gatherings, religious rituals, children's religious education, and gender roles within the household. These negotiations are shaped by either individual choice or intense social pressures, including limited access to halal facilities, public stigma, and the marginal position of Muslim communities in South Korea.⁶

The negotiation of religious and legal norms in such marriages is a private or domestic concern and reflects how Islamic law functions dynamically within minority contexts. Mixed-marriage families demonstrate the condition in which Islamic legal principles are implemented, reinterpreted, and adapted to preserve marital harmony amid cultural and religious differences. These interactions reveal the flexible and contextual nature of Islamic jurisprudence when practised in non-Muslim societies.⁷ At the same time, they raise critical normative questions: to what extent can accommodation of non-Islamic customs, such as participation in social events involving alcohol, be accepted without violating the essential objectives of Islamic law? Furthermore, how can Muslim spouses maintain their religious identity and transmit Islamic values to their children while respecting the beliefs of their non-Muslim partners?

Family law is an essential factor in mixed marriages, given that Indonesian and South Korean family laws differ, particularly regarding Islamic family law. Furthermore, mixed marriages may have legal repercussions, particularly regarding children's civil rights, shared property, and inheritance rights, in compliance with relevant laws.⁸ Therefore, establishing certainty in its application is necessary, particularly for couples in mixed marriages. Most of Indonesia's Muslim immigrants settled in industrial areas such as Ansan, Busan, and Yangsan.⁹ Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) is the most prominent Islamic religious institution (Islamic organisation) recognised by the South Korean Government. This organisation is home to Muslim immigrants from all over the world, dominated by Muslims from

(*Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah*) 24, no. 1 (2025): 137–51, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i1.11882>; Shamila Dawood, "Islamic Law and Gender Equality: Challenges and Reforms in Sri Lanka's Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act," *Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 2 (2024): 288–305, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v5i2.2833>.

⁶ Hee-Soo Lee and Young-Joo Joh, "A survey of Muslim Immigrants in Korea-Focused on adaptation to Korean lifestyle and Religious observation," *Korean Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2012): 133–63, <https://doi.org/10.23015/kames.2012.33.1.006>.

⁷ Silawati et al., "The Application of Aspects of Islamic Family Law to the Muslim Minority in Singapore: A Literature Review," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion (IJSSR)*, January 7, 2024, 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.53639/ijssr.v5i1.206>.

⁸ Dian Aries Mujiburohman et al., "Mixed Marriage in Indonesia: Joint Property and Foreign Land Ownership Restrictions," *The Lawyer Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2023), <https://tlq.ilaw.cas.cz/index.php/tlq/article/view/572>; Mohd Norhusairi Mat Hussin et al., "Interfaith Marriage Among Muslims in Singapore," *Al-'Adalah* 22, no. 1 (2025): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v22i1.23667>.

⁹ Eka Srimulyani, "Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in Contemporary South Korea: Living as Religious Minority Group in Non-Muslim Country," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (2021): 668, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i2.9733>.



Arab, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia.¹⁰ In addition to these institutions, Indonesian Muslim Immigrants have institutions facilitated by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI), such as Indonesian Muslim Students in Korea (IMUSKA) and Indonesian Muslim Community (KMI).¹¹ These institutions host regular study programmes in mosques, serving as meeting places for Muslims in South Korea. Indonesian Muslim immigrants prefer mosques or Muslim Centres as places to gather, provided they have adequate facilities.

Previous research has explored several dimensions of this phenomenon, though often in partial or fragmented ways. Scholars have explored legal, demographic, and socio-religious issues in mixed marriages involving Indonesian citizens and foreign nationals, particularly in the context of Indonesia and South Korea. For example, Naomi Chi¹² analyse binational marriage trends in South Korea, focusing on demographic pressures, the feminisation of marriage migration, and structural inequalities within multicultural families. They highlight how gender norms, economic disparity, and rural-urban dynamics shape the flow and experience of foreign brides, especially from Southeast Asia. In addition, Eka Srimulyani¹³ and Sonezza Ladyanna¹⁴ explore how Indonesian Muslim diaspora communities in Korea organise around faith-based institutions, such as KMI and Rumaisa, to maintain religious identity and social support. Other studies by Sally Kalek¹⁵ and Dian Aries Mujiburohman et al.¹⁶ point to specific legal and educational challenges in cross-cultural families, including the teaching of Islamic values to children, the administration of property, and the barriers to legal clarity regarding land ownership for foreign spouses. These works shed light on the institutional and demographic aspects of Muslim life in South Korea but leave significant gaps unaddressed. Only a few studies have empirically examined how religious tolerance is constructed in the daily lives of mixed-marriage families, or how such practices can be normatively evaluated through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the higher objectives of Islamic law. Similarly, the role of Diaspora Islamic institutions, such as the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) and the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (IMUSKA) as mediators of religious and legal norms in non-Muslim settings, remains underexplored.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by analysing the lived experiences of Indonesian–Korean mixed-marriage families in South Korea. Specifically, it explores how couples negotiate religious tolerance and the practice of Islamic law through the dual analytical perspectives of social construction theory and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

¹⁰ Siti Umayyaton, “Masyarakat Muslim Di Korea Selatan: Studi Tentang Korea Muslim Federation (KMF) Tahun 1967-2015 M,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 11, no. 2 (2018): 135–56, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2017.112-01>.

¹¹ Sonezza Ladyanna, “Organisasi Umat Islam Indonesia Di Korea Selatan (Pengenalan, Masalah, Dan Tantangan)*,” *Thaqafiyat : Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban Dan Informasi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2014): 39–51.

¹² Chi, “Walking in Her Shoes.”

¹³ Eka Srimulyani, “Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in Contemporary South Korea: Living as Religious Minority Group in Non-Muslim Country,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (December 2021): 668, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i2.9733>.

¹⁴ Ladyanna, “Organisasi Umat Islam Indonesia Di Korea Selatan (Pengenalan, Masalah, Dan Tantangan)*.”

¹⁵ Sally Kalek, “Challenges and Issues in Mixed Marriage Between the Indonesian and Non-Indonesia Diaspora,” *Smart: Journal of Sharia, Tradition and Modernity* 4, no. 2 (2024): 90–117.

¹⁶ Mujiburohman et al., “Mixed Marriage in Indonesia.”



Social construction theory provides a framework for understanding how the meanings of tolerance are created, contested, and redefined through everyday interactions among spouses, families, and communities. It highlights the dynamic processes by which cultural and religious differences are managed and accommodated. Meanwhile, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* offers a normative framework for evaluating whether these practices fulfil or undermine the higher purposes of Islamic law, including *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (the preservation of faith), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (family and progeny), *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (dignity), and *ḥifẓ al-ijtima'* (social harmony).¹⁷ Incorporating these two perspectives allows us to describe how tolerance is constructed and assess its implications for Islamic legal and ethical objectives. Departing from the above background, this study therefore explores (a) how couples reconstruct the meaning of religious tolerance and apply Islamic family law principles, (b) the role of KMF and IMUSKA as diaspora institutions in preserving and mediating Islamic norms, and (c) how these practices align with the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), particularly in maintaining faith, family harmony, and social cohesion.

Methods

This study employs a socio-juridical approach with a predominantly qualitative design, supported by selected quantitative demographic data. The research is situated within the context of Indonesian–Korean mixed-marriage families in South Korea. It examines how Islamic legal principles are practised, adapted, and negotiated in everyday family life. Korean government statistics on Indonesian migrants and intermarriages serve as a demographic foundation, offering a macro-level overview of the phenomenon. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires with a purposive sample of ten Indonesian Muslim–Korean couples residing in South Korea. The sampling strategy was designed to capture variations in the gender of the Muslim spouse, length of marriage, religious background of the Korean spouse, presence of children, and degree of involvement in Islamic institutions. In addition, key informants were drawn from Islamic institutions, including the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) and the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (IMUSKA), both playing significant roles in religious education, community support, and youth engagement. These institutional perspectives complement the family-level narratives by providing insights into how Islamic norms are preserved, adapted, or reinterpreted in a minority context.

To ensure transparency, the demographic profile of the family informants is presented in Table 1. Informants are anonymised using codes (C1–C10). The table illustrates diversity across gender, marital duration, religious background of the Korean spouse, family structure, institutional involvement, and key issues/practices to strengthen the representativeness of the qualitative data.

¹⁷ Opik Rozikin et al., “Contextualizing Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah in Indigenous Legal Practices: A Comparative Study of Family Resilience in Kasepuhan Ciptagelar and Kampung Naga,” *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 2 (2025): 344–62, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i2.27760>; Achmad Siddiq et al., “Reconstructing Waqf Share Policies: A Maqashid Sharia Approach with Insights from Indonesia,” *El-Mashlahah* 15, no. 1 (2025): 79–100, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v15i1.9029>; Norcahyono Norcahyono et al., “Reconstructing the Philosophy of Marriage: Banjar Wedding Rituals as Cultural Implementation of Maqashid al-Nikah in Achieving Spiritual Sanctity and Social Harmony,” *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 24, no. 2 (2024): 393–410, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v24i2.15617>.



Table 1. Demographic Profile of Informants

Code	Gender (Muslim Spouse)	Length of Marriage	Spouse's Religion	Children	Involvement in Islamic Institutions	Key Issues/Practices
C1	Female	2 years	Non-Muslim	None	IMUSKA activities	Early adaptation; religion seen as a personal matter
C2	Male	5 years	Non-Muslim	1 child	KMF religious events	Occasional compromise in family gatherings (soju drinking)
C3	Female	7 years	Non-Muslim	2 children	No formal involvement	Gradual Islamic education for children; support from colleagues for halal practices
C4	Male	3 years	Non-Muslim	1 child	IMUSKA & local mosque	Negotiation on food practices; IMUSKA family support
C5	Female	10 years	Converting to Islam	2 children	Active in KMF	Husband converted to Islam; learning religion with wife's guidance
C6	Male	4 years	Non-Muslim	None	Occasional mosque attendance	Workplace drinking pressures; religious compromise for livelihood
C7	Female	8 years	Non-Muslim	2 children	IMUSKA family programs	Flexible practice to respect non-Muslim in-laws
C8	Male	6 years	Converting to Islam	1 child	KMF youth mentoring	Raising a child with dual cultural exposure; spouse learning Islam
C9	Female	12 years	Non-Muslim	3 children	Strong involvement in KMF	Structured Islamic education for

						children; strong community role
C10	Male	2 years	Non-Muslim	None	Limited religious involvement	Facing stigma as a Muslim minority; early adaptation struggles

Data analysis followed three stages: (1) data reduction, by filtering and categorising information relevant to the research objectives; (2) data display, through thematic mapping and structured organisation of findings; and (3) conclusion-drawing, by identifying recurring patterns and formulating interpretations. The study's analytical framework integrates social construction theory and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach. The former, based on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept, explains how tolerance and religious meaning are socially produced through everyday interaction. The latter, drawing on the classical works of *al-Shāṭibī*, provides a normative lens to assess whether these negotiated practices uphold the higher objectives of Islamic law, namely *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (the protection of faith), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (family and lineage), and *ḥifẓ al-ijtima'* (social harmony).

Results and Discussion

The Realities of Indonesian Mixed Marriage in South Korea

Mixed marriages between Indonesian immigrants and South Korean residents have increased, reflecting broader trends in globalisation and migration. According to the Korea Statistical Information Centre, the number of mixed-marriage couples between Indonesia and South Korea increased from 51 in 2020 to 70 in 2021, and further to 82 in 2022.¹⁸ This upward trend indicates a significant change in marital trends, as more Indonesian women are opting to wed South Korean men. These marriages have a variety of reasons, from hopes for family stability and cultural assimilation to the desire for better economic opportunities and financial security. This phenomenon illustrates the impact of larger socio-economic and cultural processes in addition to personal choices. Economic considerations, including South Korea's thriving labour market and high standard of living, frequently draw Indonesian immigrants looking for better prospects. At the same time, these unions are becoming more common in South Korean society due to cultural exchange and the country's growing openness to variety. Furthermore, cross-border interactions have been made easier through global matchmaking services, digital platforms, and mutual networks, helping couples overcome geographical and cultural barriers.

Marriage between a Muslim and a convert from a different cultural background, in this case between Indonesians and South Koreans, represents both a challenge and an opportunity for Islamic *da'wah*. Cultural differences do not contradict the principles of *sharī'ah* as long as both partners share the same faith

¹⁸ Ministry of Data and Statistics Republic of Korea, "Marriages of between Korean Bridegroom (by Marital Status) and Foreign Bride(by Nationality)," March 20, 2025, https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?sso=ok&returnurl=https%3A%2F%2Fkosis.kr%3A443%2FstatHtml%2FstatHtml.do%3Flist_id%3DA23%26obj_var_id%3D%26seqNo%3D%26tblId%3DDT_1B83A31%26vw_cd%3DMT_ETITLE%26language%3Den%26orgId%3D101%26path%3D%252Feng%252Fsearch%252FsearchList.do%26conn_path%3DA6%26itm_id%3D%26scrId%3D%26.

foundation. The Qur'an states, "O mankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous" (Qur'an, 49:13). This verse emphasises that cultural diversity is divinely intended and should be guided by piety rather than uniformity. In practice, converts may bring perspectives and habits shaped by their previous cultural environment that do not immediately conform to Islamic teachings. Therefore, the internalisation of Islamic values within such families requires patience, gradual education, and wisdom to foster genuine understanding and sustainable faith.

The notion of *tadarruj* (gradualism) is a significant strategy in promoting Islam among Muslim couples, exhibited since the era of prophethood. Islam was revealed progressively rather than all at once to enhance individuals' comprehension and preparedness to implement its teachings. Similarly, in cross-cultural households, incorporating Islamic teachings for Muslim spouses must take into account psychological factors, cultural backgrounds, and their capacity to understand new values that may be unfamiliar to them. *Tadarruj* emphasises gradual transformation through a systematic, continuous process. Muslim couples serve as key educators and exemplars, adeptly bridging divides and gradually instilling Islamic teachings in daily life with wisdom.

From the perspective of comparative jurisprudence, all schools concur that the legitimacy of marriage necessitates adherence to the same faith, specifically Islam; however, they diverge about the procedures and temporal constraints applicable when one party has not yet embraced the religion. The Hanafi and Maliki schools permit a grace period for non-Muslim couples prior to the annulment of the marriage contract, whereas the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools explicitly assert that conversion to Islam must occur before marriage or during the *iddah* period. All schools acknowledge the importance of a judicious strategy for cultivating a community of converts through the integration of patience and exemplary conduct. In cross-cultural households, the Muslim spouse assumes a pivotal role as a spiritual leader, ensuring that Islam is not merely acknowledged formally, but profoundly experienced and internalised by the convert couple in their daily existence. However, Indonesian Muslims in mixed marriages face unique challenges related to family law, as Islamic principles often differ from South Korean legal standards. Many Indonesian Muslims prefer to abide by Islamic law in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, property rights, and business transactions. This preference can create legal complexity when navigating the South Korean legal system, which may not recognise or accommodate Islamic practices.¹⁹ For example, issues surrounding the validity of marriages performed in accordance with Islamic rituals versus those recognised by South Korean authorities can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. Cultural differences also play an essential role in this mixed marriage. Differences in social traditions and expectations can lead to friction between couples and their families. For example, while traditional Indonesian customs may emphasise family involvement in marriage decisions, South Korean norms may prioritise individual choices. These conflicting cultures can bring tension to relationships and complicate

¹⁹ Eka Srimulyani, "Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in Contemporary South Korea: Living as Religious Minority Group in Non-Muslim Country," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (2021): 668–88, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i2.9733>.



family integration. In addition, the religious differences inherent in this unity can pose additional challenges, especially when raising children exposed to Islamic and South Korean cultural practices.

The legal framework governing mixed marriages is also an essential factor. In Indonesia, interfaith marriages are often subject to strict rules that may not align with the personal beliefs of the individuals involved. This situation is further complicated by the prohibition against Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men under Islamic law.²⁰ For many couples, these legal and religious constraints create complex, often frustrating, and excessive requirements. In some cases, individuals may need to convert to their partner's religion to meet the conditions for marriage registration. This can have profound personal and familial implications. Others may choose to marry abroad in countries with more accommodating laws, only to face additional issues when seeking to have their marriage recognised in Indonesia.²¹ Efforts to address these challenges have been limited but are increasingly important in the context of globalisation and the growing number of mixed marriages involving Indonesian citizens. Advocacy groups and legal practitioners have called for reforms to create a more inclusive and equitable legal framework, highlighting the need to balance religious considerations with individual rights and the realities of an increasingly interconnected world.

Indonesian-Korean mixed marriages have become increasingly common in South Korea, symbolising the broader influence of globalisation and cross-border migration. These unions represent intricate intersections of cultural exchange, adaptation, and challenges faced by multicultural families in a society historically marked by ethnic homogeneity. Such marriages highlight the evolving nature of family structures and social integration in South Korea. A key factor shaping these unions is South Korea's marriage migration policy, which facilitates international marriages while presenting legal and social hurdles for migrants. These policies, coupled with families' lived experiences, underscore the need for inclusive approaches to support multiculturalism and foster harmonious integration. Kim and Kilkey discussed how South Korea's approach to marriage migration has evolved, emphasising the need for policies that support the integration of marriage migrants into society.²² The Korean government has established various programmes to help multicultural families, including language education and cultural orientation, which are essential for fostering social cohesion and understanding.²³ However, these policies can sometimes inadvertently reinforce gender inequality, as they can prioritise the economic contribution of migrant women while neglecting their social and emotional well-being.²⁴

²⁰ Srimulyani, "Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in Contemporary South Korea," 2021.

²¹ Arifki Budia Warman et al., "Reforming Marriage Registration Policies in Malaysia and Indonesia," *BESTUUR* 11, no. 1 (August) (2023): 61, <https://doi.org/10.20961/bestuur.v11i1.66320>.

²² Gyuchan Kim and Majella Kilkey, "Marriage Migration Policy in South Korea: Social Investment beyond the Nation State," *International Migration* 56, no. 1 (2018): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12350>.

²³ Min-Chul Hwang, "Exploring Marriage Migrants' Citizenship Acquisition in South Korea," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 24, no. 3 (2015): 376–402, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196815596291>.

²⁴ Gyuchan Kim and Majella Kilkey, "Marriage Migration Policy in South Korea: Social Investment beyond the Nation State," *International Migration* 56, no. 1 (2018): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12350>.



Indonesian-Korean mixed marriage represents a dynamic and evolving aspect of South Korea's multicultural landscape. While these families face integration- and discrimination-related issues, they also contribute to cultural diversity and social cohesion. As South Korea continues to navigate its identity as a multicultural society, the experiences and needs of Indonesian-Korean mixed families will be crucial in shaping inclusive policies and practices that foster understanding and acceptance. While the increasing prevalence of mixed marriages between Indonesian immigrants and South Korean residents reflects the evolving social dynamics, it also highlights the significant challenges faced by these couples. From the legal complexities stemming from different cultural and religious practices to the issues of social integration, mixed marriage requires careful consideration and support from both communities. Addressing these challenges is essential to fostering successful multicultural families in South Korea's diverse society.²⁵

Mixed Marriage Families' Views on their Religion in South Korea

Islam remains a minority religion in South Korea, and this status influences how Indonesian–Korean families negotiate their daily practices of faith. Informant C1 shared that from the beginning of the marriage, she and her Korean spouse agreed to respect one another's religious obligations. Religion, in her view, was a personal matter, and thus each partner was free to practice according to their own conscience. For their children, who were still very young, religious education was left open, with the hope that they could make their own informed choices in the future. C1 said, *"From the very beginning of our marriage, we agreed that religion is a personal choice. I continue to pray and fast, while my husband does not. For our children, who are still young, we will let them decide for themselves later on which path is best."*²⁶ This reflects an approach of tolerance and mutual respect, where family harmony takes precedence over imposing a single religious path.

For some couples, conversion to Islam becomes a turning point in family religious dynamics. Informant C5, for example, explained that her Korean husband embraced Islam at the time of marriage and was gradually supported in learning about the faith. She encouraged him to participate in study sessions organised by mosque-based groups such as Rumaisha, which specifically facilitate religious learning for mixed-marriage families.²⁷ Although opportunities for structured learning were limited due to the minority status of Muslims in South Korea, her role in guiding and motivating her husband was central to ensuring that the family could maintain an Islamic orientation despite cultural and social challenges.

A similar experience was described by informant C3, who actively sought to balance her spouse's adaptation to Islam with the demands of daily life in Korea. While her husband showed interest in Islamic practices, he initially faced difficulties at work where drinking culture was deeply embedded in professional interactions. Over time, however, his colleagues began to understand his commitment and even supported him by choosing halal restaurants for office gatherings. C3 reflected on this experience, *"My husband was genuinely interested in learning about Islam, but the challenges at his workplace were very difficult. Almost every gathering involved soju. Over time, his colleagues began to understand, and now they even choose halal restaurants when they get*

²⁵ Srimulyani, "Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in Contemporary South Korea," 2021.

²⁶ C1, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

²⁷ C5, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)



together. That has made it easier for him to live as a Muslim.”²⁸ This gradual accommodation not only eased her personal struggles but also demonstrated how tolerance and persistence can lead to broader acceptance of Islamic practices in a non-Muslim environment.

In other cases, the choice to maintain religious practices required significant negotiation within the household. Informant C2 admitted that while he tried to uphold Islamic prohibitions, he occasionally joined social sessions involving soju and other alcoholic beverages with his wife’s family as a gesture of respect. He explained that this was not a matter of abandoning his faith but rather a strategy to avoid conflict and maintain family harmony. *“I actually try not to break religious prohibitions, but when there are family gatherings with my wife’s relatives, I sometimes join in drinking a little soju. It’s not because I want to, but rather to show respect to the family. For me, maintaining good relations is also part of religious duty.”*²⁹ From his perspective, preserving peaceful relations was also a form of religious duty.

Informant C6 shared a comparable experience, noting that workplace culture often pressured him to participate in alcohol-drinking rituals, particularly soju, which are deeply embedded in professional interactions. He recognised the tension between this practice and Islamic teachings but justified occasional compromise as necessary for sustaining his job and his family welfare.³⁰ Meanwhile, other couples sought to navigate these challenges by turning to community and religious institutions for support. Informant C9, who was actively involved in KMF activities, emphasised that regular participation in mosque programmes helped her children develop a clear Islamic identity despite growing up in a non-Muslim society. She and her husband prioritised religious education through formal lessons and community events, believing that consistent exposure to Islamic values was crucial to protecting their children’s faith.³¹ Informant C4 shared this sentiment, highlighting the importance of IMUSKA family programmes in providing both religious knowledge and social networks for mixed-marriage households. He stated, *“The family programmes from IMUSKA are very helpful. We can learn religion together, meet other couples in similar situations, and our children also have Muslim friends. It makes us feel that we are not alone, even though the number of Muslims in Korea is very small.”*³² These institutions thus serve as mediators, helping families to sustain Islamic practices while living in an environment where Muslim identity is often marginalised.

Flexibility was another common theme among the informants. Informant C7 described her approach as one of respect and adaptation, especially toward her non-Muslim in-laws, *“I try to respect my non-Muslim in-laws. I don’t force them to follow my rules, but I still pray and fast as usual. I prefer to show Islam through daily conduct. In this way, relationships remain harmonious without anyone feeling pressured.”*³³ While she maintained her own religious obligations, she did not impose them on her husband or his family, preferring instead to model Islamic values through everyday conduct. This strategy, she argued, minimised tension while still allowing her to practice her faith authentically. Informant C8, whose spouse had converted to Islam, highlighted

²⁸ C3, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

²⁹ C2, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

³⁰ C6, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

³¹ C9, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

³² C4, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

³³ C7, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)



a different kind of flexibility. He aimed to raise their child with awareness of both Korean culture and Islamic values. For him, the priority was not strict separation but rather the integration of faith into the family's multicultural life.³⁴

In sum, the views of Indonesian–Korean mixed-marriage families on religion reveal a spectrum of strategies shaped by both conviction and circumstance. Some informants, such as C5, C8, and C9, emphasised a strong commitment to Islamic identity, often supported by conversion, mosque involvement, or structured religious education for children. Others, including C2 and C6, acknowledged occasional compromises, such as participation in gatherings involving alcoholic drinks, as pragmatic responses to workplace or family pressures, yet did so to maintain broader family harmony rather than to signal religious neglect. Still others, like C1 and C7, adopted a flexible approach that prioritised mutual respect and tolerance within the household, allowing different religious orientations to coexist without conflict. These diverse perspectives underscore that religion in mixed marriages is not experienced as a rigid system of rules but as a dynamic set of values negotiated within specific social environments. While all families sought to preserve their faith in different approaches, the degree of adherence, compromise, and adaptation varied depending on personal conviction, conversion, institutional support, and the surrounding cultural pressures. Ultimately, these findings illustrate that religious identity in mixed-marriage families is socially constructed, contextually negotiated, and often oriented toward achieving both personal faithfulness and collective harmony.

The Implementation of Islamic Family Principles in South Korean Mixed Marriage Families from the Perspective of Social Construction.

The trend of mixed marriage in South Korea has been growing markedly since the late 1990s and early 2000s. Historically, high levels of ethnic homogeneity have given this country characteristics. However, demographic changes, including low fertility rates and marriage pressures, have contributed to an increase in international marriages. This trend is especially dominant in rural areas, where there is a "bride deficit" that stands out because the men outnumber women, leaving only a few local women for men to marry. This prompts Korean men to seek out foreign brides, especially from Southeast Asia and China.³⁵

The influx of marriage migrants has changed South Korea's demographic landscape. From 1990 to 2005, about 250,000 international marriages were registered, with a significant proportion involving Korean men marrying foreign women, mainly from Vietnam, China, and the Philippines.³⁶ The desire for companionship and emotional support is a significant motivator for men seeking foreign partners. The perception that foreign women, particularly from Indonesia, may be more traditional and family-oriented can appeal to men who feel disconnected from local dating norms.³⁷ This trend has been driven by socio-

³⁴ C8, Personal Interview, (South Korea, 2024)

³⁵ Hyun-Sil Kim, "Social Integration and Health Policy Issues for International Marriage Migrant Women in South Korea: International Marriage Migrant Women in South Korea," *Public Health Nursing* 27, no. 6 (2010): 561–70, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1446.2010.00883.x>.

³⁶ Kim and Kilkey, "Marriage Migration Policy in South Korea," 2018.

³⁷ Eun-Jeong Han and Paula Groves Price, "Communicating across Difference: Co-Cultural Theory, Capital and Multicultural Families in Korea," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 11, no. 1 (2018): 21–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2017.1367026>.



economic factors, including the need for labour in rural communities and the desire for friendship among men who may struggle to find a local partner due to changing social norms and economic conditions.³⁸

Islamic family law, which is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, governs all aspects of family life, including marriage, divorce, inheritance, and family obligations. It emphasises justice, compassion, and the protection of individual rights, particularly for women and children who are vulnerable. The family is seen as the foundation of society, with laws designed to promote justice, equality, and ethical responsibility for both men and women. Marriage in Islam is seen as a contract that fosters shared responsibility and promotes harmony in the family.³⁹ Sharia, the foundation of Islamic family law, provides comprehensive guidance on family matters and adapts to changing social contexts while retaining its core principles. Legal reforms in modern Muslim societies, such as those in Southeast Asia, address contemporary issues related to women's rights and marriage age requirements, balancing religious teachings with societal needs.⁴⁰ This adaptability is key to ensuring justice in the family and protecting the rights of women and children, tackling issues such as polygamy, guardianship in marriage, and the minimum legal age of marriage.⁴¹

Islamic family principles provide a normative framework that perceives marriage not merely as a social contract, but as a *'aqd mithāq ghālīz*—a solemn, sacred covenant. The Qur'an highlights the divine essence of marriage: "*And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy...*" (QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:21). Islamic law sets forth clear mutual responsibilities: the husband must provide for his family (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:233), offer spiritual leadership and protection (QS. At-Tahrīm [66]:6), while the wife is entrusted with maintaining dignity and loyalty within the boundaries of Sharia (QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34). These principles remain applicable in marriages involving converts, yet the process of internalising Islamic values may be more complex due to pre-existing cultural norms, language barriers, and religious backgrounds. Converts may bring perspectives or customs that are not fully in line with Islamic teachings, requiring a compassionate yet principled approach to religious nurture.

This is where the Islamic legal principle of *tadarruj*—gradualism—becomes essential. Just as the Qur'an was revealed progressively to match the readiness of early Muslim society (QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:106), the religious development of a convert

³⁸ Phan Thi Hong Xuan et al., "Thriving in Intercultural Marriages: Navigating Cultural Conflicts and Utilizing Social Resources in Korean-Vietnamese Couples in Vietnam," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Communication, Language, Education and Social Sciences (CLESS 2023)*, ed. Muhamad Izzuddin Zainudin and Hawa Rahmat, vol. 819, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (Atlantis Press SARL, 2023), https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-196-8_24.

³⁹ Zaini Nasohah, "Dynamics of Islamic Family Law in Facing Current Challenges in Southeast Asia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i1.16553>.

⁴⁰ Maulinda, K. F., Purnama, L. W., Marelyno, M. A., Sa'diyah, S., Hidayat, F., & Yahya, M. (2024). Review of Islamic Family Law: Social Implications and Juridical Implementation in the Family Context in Indonesia. *Demak Universal Journal of Islam and Sharia*, 2(3), 271–290. <https://doi.org/10.61455/deujis.v2i03.159>

⁴¹ Nasohah, "Dynamics of Islamic Family Law in Facing Current Challenges in Southeast Asia."

spouse must also be approached in stages, allowing for incremental understanding and practice. The *qawwām* (family leader), typically the Muslim husband, bears the dual responsibility of fulfilling material needs and guiding spiritual growth through patience, wisdom, and example. In contexts like South Korea, where Islamic law is not part of the national legal system, Muslim families must rely on informal mechanisms involving religious communities, personal commitment, and intra-family dialogue to maintain an Islamic atmosphere in daily life

According to Berger and Luckmann's theoretical perspective, social interaction shapes three forms of reality: subjective, symbolic, and objective.⁴² Social construction involves three interconnected stages: externalisation, objectivity, and internalisation. Externalisation refers to humans adapting to the socio-cultural world as a product of human creation, which is summarised as "Society is a product of man." During externalisation, humans continue to create social systems or social frameworks. The externalised products differ from the natural environment, which shapes anthropological needs. Thus, human beings must constantly externalise through activities to build a stable relationship with their social environment. Over time, habitual actions form patterns that retain their meaning for individuals, even when they become routine and embedded in their general knowledge, which can then be applied to future practices.⁴³ The process of human institutionalisation begins with the initial interaction between individuals and their environment, leading to distinctive behaviours that help define roles in social groups.

Objectivity involves social interactions that become institutionalised or made objective. Objectivity occurs when the results of human externalisation are realised both mentally and physically. The result is an objective reality that can challenge even the factors that originally produced it. Humans create the objectivity of social institutions, and the process of externalisation and objectivity is dialectical and sustainable.⁴⁴ In this way, society is a product and producer of social reality. Knowledge of society, which includes rules, values, beliefs, and myths, is the first form of understanding institutional structures. Social institutions mediate objectivity, presenting it as reality to its members. According to Berger and Luckmann, the world of everyday life is composed of space and time, which create a hierarchy of social roles. These two elements organise actions based on social classifications and roles, and the concept of signification is essential in objectivity, as symbols or signs are created and given meaning through social use.

Internalisation is the process by which individuals integrate themselves into a social institution or organisation. Through this process, individuals absorb the objective world into their consciousness, thereby becoming influenced by social structures. This process allows individuals to become products of society. For Berger, reality is not scientifically shaped but constructed, and as such, it is plural. Everyone interprets social reality differently, shaped by their unique experiences, education,

⁴² Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Open Road Media, 2011).

⁴³ Mohammad Ali et al., "Social Construction of Widow's Marital Rights without Finishing Waiting Period (Idah) in Indonesia," *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 30, no. 5 (2021): 13–28, <https://doi.org/10.17951/sil.2021.30.5.13-28>.

⁴⁴ Ferry Adhi Dharma, "Konstruksi Realitas Sosial: Pemikiran Peter L. Berger Tentang Kenyataan Sosial: The Social Construction of Reality: Peter L. Berger's Thoughts About Social Reality," *Kanal: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.21070/kanal.v6i2.101>.



social environment, and preferences. Social construction theory can provide profound insights as we analyse how the principles of Islamic family law are applied in the lives of Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage families in South Korea. The data were collected through interviews and questionnaires distributed to Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage couples across several regions of South Korea. The following is a list of questions constructed based on social construction theory.

To analyse this questionnaire using the social construction of family theory, we need to examine how social and cultural factors shape individuals' perspectives on family values, religion, family roles, and childcare in the context of Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage families in South Korea. The social construction of family theory holds that social reality, including family roles and values, is shaped and defined by social interaction. Therefore, the respondents' answers will reflect how they construct meaning about the roles of family, religious values, and culture in their lives. The following table presents a list of questions constructed based on the theory of social construction.

Table 2. List of Questions

Information	Question	Analysis
1 Demographic Data	1. Name, 2. Work, 3. Duration of marriage, and 4. Spouse work	The list of questions provides an overview of the respondent's background. This is important for understanding their social context, which can influence how they construct family realities and their role in them. The duration of marriage and work can reflect the stability of the family and the pattern of social interaction within the family.
2 Cultural Aspect	1. Do you and your partner face significant cultural differences? 2. Are there any obstacles in terms of culture and communication, especially related to language or cultural differences in the family? 3. How often do cultural and/or language differences cause conflicts in families? 4. Do you find it difficult to adapt to your partner's family culture? 5. Can you give some examples of cultural and language differences that cause obstacles in family life?	These questions reveal how cultural differences (e.g., Indonesia and Korea) affect family life. In the social construction theory, cultural differences result from different social interactions that yield different views and practices. Externalisation is seen in how couples adapt each other's cultures into their home life. Communication barriers between spouses due to language differences represent a process of externalisation in which each family's culture is brought out and applied in their interactions.

3	Religious Aspects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways do religious differences cause obstacles in your family life? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship • The Role of Husband and Wife in the Family • Childcare • Distribution of Wealth • Other.... 2. Can you give some examples of the obstacles mentioned above? 	<p>The result of this cultural interaction creates an objectified social reality in which established cultural norms and practices are considered part of an objective, accepted social structure.</p>
			<p>This question concerns how religious differences (Islam and the couple's religion) affect family relationships. The process of externalisation here can be seen in how couples interpret and implement their religious principles in their daily lives, including how religion influences the role of husband and wife in the family and the distribution of wealth.</p>
			<p>The objectivation process can be seen when socially accepted religious norms are internalised and applied in daily life. For example, religious teachings on worship or the rights and obligations of husband and wife are used as guidelines in the family and then become part of an objective social structure.</p>
			<p>The theory of social construction also indicates that religion is formed and dynamic. Responses to religious constraints provide insight into how religion can change or adapt within mixed-marriage family life.</p>
4	Child and Parenting Aspects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do cultural differences affect the way you and your partner educate children? 2. Do religious differences affect the way you and your partner educate your children? 	<p>The questions explore how cultural and religious differences affect the way couples educate their children. From the perspective of social construction, it shows how social and religious norms are shaped in family interactions</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Does parenting in your family involve Islamic values? (For example, teaching to recite Bismillah before starting something). 4. Have you introduced or even started to align Islam with children? 5. Can you give an example of the practice of introducing Islam to children that you have done? 6. Is your partner actively involved in introducing Islam to your children? If so, please provide examples of some of the entries in question! 	<p>and how families internalise these values for their children.</p> <p>Internalisation occurs when family and religious values that have been accepted as part of objective reality, such as how to educate children in accordance with Islamic principles (e.g., reading Bismillah), begin to be internalised and become part of the individual (child's) experience.</p> <p>This process also shows how family reality is shaped by the interaction between culture and religion, and how mixed families adapt their religious values to different social situations, as in South Korea.</p>
Aspects of the Korean Muslim Community (KMF)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How often do you interact with the mosque? 2. At any moment, do you interact with the mosque (five times prayer/Friday prayer/Eid prayer/Eid al-adha prayer/recitation/others...)? 3. Do you or your partner interact with Islamic institutions in South Korea? 4. Do you know KMF (Korean Muslim Federation)? 5. Have you ever participated in activities organised by KMF? If so, give an example of the activity! 6. Does KMF have a role to play in helping you and your partner in introducing Islam more deeply? If yes, give an example of the role! 7. Does KMF have a role for your family in introducing and understanding Islamic family law? If yes, give an example of the role! 	<p>The questions relate to the family's interactions with Islamic institutions in South Korea, such as the Mosque and the KMF. From the perspective of social construction theory, this can be analysed as part of how the family constructs its social meanings of religion and community.</p> <p>Involvement with KMF can be seen as an effort to externalise Islamic values into their social life, such as through participation in mosque activities, recitations, or other community activities.</p> <p>It also illustrates how the social reality of religion and Islamic family law is mediated by social institutions, such as mosques and KMF. Through these interactions, they objectify these values and incorporate them into their daily lives; through</p>

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8. What are your hopes for internalisation, they are mosques or Islamic accepted and practised in their institutions in South Korea families. in the future?
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Through the theory of the social construction of family, we can see that in Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage families in South Korea, their experiences with cultural and religious differences shape their social realities regarding family and childcare. The process of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation occurs when couples adapt, shape, and accept the values of both their cultures and religions, as well as how those values are practised in their daily family life. By understanding this process, we can better grasp how these families navigate the challenges of building harmonious families while maintaining their religious and cultural values. Based on the data collected through interviews and questionnaires, the following are the results of data analysis applied using social construction theory.

Table 3. Interview Results

Theoretical Stages	Explanation
1 Externalisation	The process of externalisation refers to how individuals adapt to their social and cultural worlds, which are seen as products of human creation. In the context of Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage families, externalisation occurs when the couple seeks to adjust to South Korean cultural and social norms while maintaining the Islamic values they uphold. Early in their marriage, some couples struggled to adapt to Islamic family law, such as the division of rights and obligations in the household, child custody, and the roles of husband and wife, in their lives, influenced by Korean culture that differs from Islamic traditions. For example, differences in understanding the roles of husband and wife in the household can be a source of tension, especially when Korean cultural norms lead to a more egalitarian view, while Islamic family law tends to uphold a more traditional division of roles. Another obstacle is the difficulty of committing to consuming only halal food, which is indeed hard to implement in South Korea.
2 Objectivity	At the objective stage, what has been issued or externalised becomes an objective social reality accepted by members of society. In this case, objectification occurs when mixed-marriage couples begin to see and internalise Islamic family law in their lives as part of the social reality formed through their experiences and interactions. However, the application of Islamic family law in family life is often distorted by

varied cultural and religious interpretations, which makes some of its principles seem irrelevant or inapplicable in the context of their lives in South Korea. For example, Islamic norms related to polygamy, inheritance rights, or childcare may be difficult to understand or accept for couples with Korean cultural backgrounds, who have different views on family relationships and individual rights. Therefore, although Islamic family law already exists as an objective concept, its understanding can vary between couples with different cultural backgrounds. Some examples of obstacles encountered in this objectification process include the intervention of families unfamiliar with prior Islamic values, particularly Korean families intervening in childcare-related matters.

3 Internalisation

In the internalisation stage, the individual or couple begins to accept and integrate the social norms that have been entrenched in their lives. In Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage families, this internalisation process occurs when couples begin to understand and internalise Islamic family law in their daily lives, despite cultural and religious differences that affect its implementation. For example, despite initial differences in perspective on the division of roles between husband and wife, after interacting and undergoing a process of externalisation and objectification, the couple begins to understand the core values of Islamic family law, such as mutual respect, compassion, and responsibility in raising children, and begins to apply them in their lives. At this stage, the more egalitarian and individualistic influences of Korean culture may interact with more traditional Islamic teachings, leading to compromises in childcare, household duties, and family financial management. Several mixed-marriage families have succeeded in internalising these Islamic family legal values at varying levels. Some families have to apply this principle perfectly, even though being a minority in South Korea is not easy. However, we encountered a different example in several other mixed-marriage families, in which the principles of Islamic family law were not fully applied due to the Korean spouse's lack of support in this regard.

Using social construction theory enables us to see the processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation that play an essential role in how Indonesian-Korean mixed-marriage couples implement Islamic family law in their lives in South Korea. The cultural, linguistic, and religious differences they faced early in their marriage influenced how they adapted and integrated the principles of

Islamic family law. However, despite the initial obstacles, through a constant social process, these mixed-marriage couples sought to find a balance between their cultural values and the Islamic family law they adhered to, creating an interpretation that suited the context of their new lives in South Korea.

Analysis of Mixed-Marriage Families from the Perspective of al-Shāṭibī's *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

Al-Shāṭibī's conceptualisation of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in *al-Muwāfaqāt* offers a useful framework for understanding how Indonesian–Korean mixed-marriage families negotiate Islamic law in a non-Muslim context. He divides *maqāṣid* into three tiers: *al-ḍarūriyyāt* (necessities), *al-ḥājjiyyāt* (need), and *al-taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishments). When applied to the lived experiences of Muslim minority families, this tripartite structure reveals both the resilience and adaptability of Islamic law.⁴⁵ *Maqāṣid al-ḍarūriyyāt* aim to preserve human welfare in both the worldly and spiritual realms, and harm arises when these fundamental needs are unmet. *Maqāṣid al-ḥājjiyyāt* serve a secondary role, supporting the *al-ḍarūriyyāt* by addressing needs that mitigate difficulties arising from the five core principles. *maqāṣid al-taḥsīniyyāt* function as tertiary objectives, perfecting both *al-ḍarūriyyāt* and *al-ḥājjiyyāt*, and encompass social customs, practices, and ethical conduct.⁴⁶ According to Syāṭibī, the *maqāṣid dharuriyyaat* are structured around five general principles (*kulliyat al-khamsah*): *ḥifẓ ad-dīn* (protection of religion), *ḥifẓ an-nafs* (protection of life), *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect), *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth), and *ḥifẓ an-nasl* (protection of progeny).⁴⁷

At the level of *al-ḍarūriyyāt*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (preservation of religion) stands as the most critical objective. Families reported varying degrees of negotiation in their daily practices. For example, some spouses described compromises in relation to alcohol consumption, either at workplace events or during family gatherings, yet emphasised that core practices such as prayer, fasting, and halal consciousness remained intact. Others, particularly those engaged in mosque activities, underscored the importance of institutional support in maintaining religious obligations despite social pressures to adapt. This suggests that while secondary practices may be adapted, the essentials of faith are safeguarded in line with al-Shāṭibī's insistence on protecting the foundations of religion.

Ḥifẓ al-nafs (the preservation of life) is equally apparent in these households. Several informants highlighted the difficulties of workplace culture in South Korea, where alcohol consumption is often central to professional relationships. For some, limited compromise was deemed necessary to protect employment and, by extension, the family's financial stability. Within al-Shāṭibī's framework, such decisions reflect the principle of removing hardship (*raf' al-haraj*)⁴⁸, which is part of preserving life and ensuring that the family's physical and psychological well-being is not endangered by rigid interpretations that could cause harm. Children's upbringing and education

⁴⁵ Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Lakhmī al-Gharnāṭī al-Syāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 1st ed. (Dār Ibn 'Affān, 1997), 2:17–19.

⁴⁶ Ahmad al-Raysuny, *Nazariyat Al-Maqasid 'inda Al-Imam Syatibi*, 4th ed. (Al-Ma'had al-'Alamy li al-Fikr al-Islamy, 1995), 116–17.

⁴⁷ al-Syāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:20.

⁴⁸ al-Syāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:21.



were also central to the narratives of many families and resonate strongly with the *maqāṣid* of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preserving lineage). Some parents adopted a gradualist approach to introducing Islamic teachings, while others, especially in households where the non-Muslim spouse converted to Islam, ensured a more structured religious environment. Both strategies reflect attempts to transmit faith and morality across generations, which al-Shātibī considered fundamental to the community's survival. In addition, enrolling children in both Korean schools and Islamic weekend programmes demonstrates a balance between secular and religious knowledge that safeguards not only lineage but also intellect.

Economic stability also emerged as a recurring concern. Several informants linked their decisions regarding social adaptation directly to the need to maintain employment and preserve wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). According to al-Shātibī, wealth preservation is a necessity, as it enables the fulfilment of other religious and familial duties. This dimension explains why some compromises, while seemingly in tension with Islamic law, were considered necessary within the broader *maqāṣid* framework. Beyond the necessities, many practices in these families reflect the level of *al-ḥājjiyyāt*, or secondary needs, which allow accommodations to ease difficulties. Flexibility in dealing with non-Muslim in-laws or adopting a gradual approach in children's religious education are examples of such accommodations. These practices reduce potential conflict and prevent harm while ensuring that the core objectives of the religion are maintained.

The third tier, *al-taḥsīniyyāt*, or embellishments, was also evident. Some families went beyond basic obligations by participating in mosque programmes, engaging in youth mentoring, or embracing Islamic etiquette in interfaith relations. These actions beautify religious practice and enhance Muslims' moral standing in South Korean society. They demonstrate that even in minority contexts, families aspire not only to preserve the essentials of faith but also to cultivate higher ethical and spiritual standards. Collectively, the experiences of these mixed-marriage families affirm al-Shātibī's view of *maqāṣid* as an integrated system. The essentials of religion, life, lineage, intellect, and wealth remain protected, while adjustments are made to remove hardship, and additional refinements are pursued to strengthen the moral character of family life. Occasional compromises, such as participation in cultural practices, should not be seen as betrayals of the Islamic law but as strategic adaptations that serve higher objectives. In this sense, the daily negotiations of Indonesian–Korean families reflect the dynamism of Islamic law as envisioned by al-Shātibī: a system that safeguards what is indispensable, provides leniency in the face of difficulty, and aspires to moral excellence in all contexts, including minority settings.

Conclusion

This study explores how Indonesian–Korean mixed-marriage families negotiate Islamic law and religious tolerance within South Korea's multicultural and minority context. The analysis, which integrated the social construction theory and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework, reveals that religious tolerance in these families is not a passive acceptance but an active process of negotiation shaped by cultural interaction, pragmatic adaptation, and shared moral understanding. First, mixed-marriage couples reconstruct the meaning of Islamic family values through daily practices that balance faith-based principles and social coexistence. Some spouses

adhere strictly to Islamic prohibitions, while others reinterpret them in culturally sensitive ways to maintain family harmony. These practices demonstrate that tolerance is socially constructed and relational rather than doctrinally fixed. Second, Islamic institutions such as the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) and the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (IMUSKA) play crucial mediating roles in sustaining Islamic identity and providing spaces for learning, solidarity, and intergenerational transmission of faith among Muslim minorities. Third, from a *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* perspective, these negotiated practices uphold the essential objectives of Islamic law to preserve faith (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), family and lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and social harmony (*ḥifẓ al-ijtima'*). While certain compromises may occur, they can be understood as contextual adaptations rather than deviations from religious norms.

Overall, the findings contribute to broader debates on Islamic law and religious tolerance by showing how Muslim minorities reinterpret *sharī'ah* values within non-Muslim societies. The study also highlights the importance of inclusive religious education and institutional support for promoting intercultural understanding, thereby reinforcing the dynamic and adaptive nature of Islamic law in contemporary multicultural settings. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The number of participants was relatively small and limited to Indonesian–Korean couples, which constrains the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the qualitative design emphasises depth of understanding over statistical breadth, meaning that the variations among different Muslim diaspora communities in South Korea remain underexplored. Therefore, future research should adopt comparative or mixed-method approaches, involving a larger and more diverse sample across national and religious backgrounds. In addition, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how religious negotiation and family dynamics evolve within multicultural and minority Muslim settings.

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