



INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS AMONG RELIGION CONVERSION PROCESS: LIVE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERTS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The decision to convert is a personal choice for every non-Muslim individual, where this process often involves various stages that are often full of challenges. Someone who decides to convert means that they are ready to let go of their identity as a follower of their previous religion, and accept and adapt to the identity and teachings of the new religion. This article examines the life experiences of converts regarding the process of religious learning that they receive after marriage, reviewed from individual, social and cultural factors. The purpose of this study is that researchers are interested in highlighting the life of someone who has converted to a religious belief because of a marriage. This study uses qualitative research with the narrative inquiry method. Participants in this study were Mr. DRB and Mrs. IR. The results of the study found that participants who underwent the process of converting to a religious belief were influenced by several factors, namely 1) individual factors, due to the background of the participant's family who was not very religious, since birth the participant had never been directed or taught about a religion by his parents. 2) social factors, both participants converted because they met someone who was Muslim in an organization and in a field of work. 3) Cultural factors, that initially participants found it very difficult to adapt to the culture in their environment, because previously participants had never followed Islamic teachings and had only learned from books and other people's stories.

Keywords: Religious Conversion, Converts, Individual Factors, Social Factors, Cultural Adaptation

Abstrak

Keputusan untuk menjadi mualaf adalah pilihan pribadi bagi setiap individu non-Muslim, di mana proses ini sering kali melibatkan berbagai tahapan yang tidak jarang penuh tantangan. Seseorang yang memutuskan untuk berpindah agama berarti telah siap melepaskan identitasnya sebagai penganut agama sebelumnya, serta menerima dan menyesuaikan diri dengan identitas dan ajaran agama yang baru. Artikel ini mengkaji tentang pengalaman hidup mualaf yang berkenaan dengan bagaimana proses pembelajaran agama yang diterimanya setelah melakukan pernikahan yang ditinjau dari faktor individual, sosial dan kebudayaan. Tujuan dari kajian ini peneliti tertarik untuk menyoroti kehidupan seseorang yang telah melakukan perpindahan keyakinan beragama karena sebuah pernikahan. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan metode narrative inquiry. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah saudara DRB dan Ibu IR. Hasil penelitian ditemukan partisipan yang melakukan proses perpindahan keyakinan beragama di pengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor yaitu 1) faktor individual, dilatarbelakangi oleh keluarga partisipan yang tidak terlalu agamis, sejak lahir partisipan tidak pernah diarahkan atau diajarkan mengenai suatu agama oleh orang tuanya. 2) faktor sosial, kedua partisipan melakukan perpindahan agama karena bertemu dengan seseorang yang beragama islam disebuah organisasi dan disebuah bidang pekerjaan. 3) faktor kebudayaan, bahwa awalnya partisipan sangat merasa kesusahan beradaptasi dengan budaya di lingkungannya, dikarenakan sebelumnya partisipan belum pernah mengikuti ajaran-ajaran agama islam hanya belajar melalui buku-buku dan cerita orang saja.

Kata kunci: Konversi Agama, Mualaf, Faktor Individu, Faktor Sosial, Adaptasi Budaya.



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INTRODUCTION

The process of converting to Islam is not an easy thing, because it involves important stages, such as acknowledging belief in the One God (Allah) and practicing the teachings of Islam.¹ Various reasons can motivate someone to embrace Islam, such as spiritual encouragement, the search for the meaning of life, the influence of a Muslim friend or partner, or a profound personal experience that leads to the decision.² For non-Muslim individuals, choosing to convert is a personal right that is often accompanied by challenges, such as experiencing ostracization, loss of economic support, and even the loss of family ties. However, someone who decides to convert is generally ready to leave their old identity as a follower of their previous religion, accept a new identity, and adapt to the teachings of Islam.³ Therefore, this decision must be based on mature consideration until a person is truly sure to leave the old religion and accept the new faith of his choice.

Research on converts has grown in recent years, covering various aspects of their lives. The study includes the process of Islamic religious learning in convert families which plays an important role in forming a strong Islamic foundation.⁴ In addition, the study of a convert's religious commitment highlights his understanding, practice, and efforts to maintain his new beliefs.⁵ The study also revealed the motivation of young converts in carrying out religious conversion, which is influenced by intellectual, emotional, transcendental factors, as well as the process of self-acceptance.⁶ Furthermore, studies on the meaning of life for converts show that they find inner peace after embracing Islam.⁷ Finally, research on the process of religious conversion in converts discusses how they manifest life as a Muslim and try to develop themselves in their new faith.⁸ From several previous studies, it is clear that someone who changes religion has a meaningful life experience in living his life as a convert.

Studies on converts in recent years have examined the process of religious learning, commitment to religion, and the meaning of their lives. Therefore, this article aims to examine the

¹ Fauziah Nurdin, 'Moderasi Beragama Menurut Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah: Media Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits Multi Perspektif*, 18.1 (2021), pp. 59–70.

² Titian Hakiki and Rudi Cahyono, 'Komitmen Beragama Pada Muallaf (Studi Kasus Pada Muallaf Usia Dewasa)', *Jurnal Psikologi Klinis Dan Kesehatan Mental*, 4.1 (2015), pp. 20–28.

³ Ninin Kholida; Abidin, Zaenal; Dewi, Endah Kumala Mulyono, 'Proses Pencarian Identitas Diri Pada Remaja Muallaf' (unpublished Thesis, Universitas Diponegoro., 2002).

⁴ Nuraeni Anita, 'Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada Keluarga Muallaf: Penelitian Terhadap Beberapa Keluarga Muallaf Di Kota Bandung' (unpublished Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019).

⁵ Hakiki and Cahyono, 'Komitmen Beragama Pada Muallaf (Studi Kasus Pada Muallaf Usia Dewasa)'.

⁶ Mulyono, 'Proses Pencarian Identitas Diri Pada Remaja Muallaf'.

⁷ Jannah Rauzatul, 'Gambaran Kebermaknaan Hidup Pada Muallaf Di Aceh Besar' (unpublished Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2019) <<https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/6836/>> [accessed 17 December 2024].

⁸ Ida Rahmawati and Dinie Ratri Desiningrum, 'Pengalaman Menjadi Muallaf: Sebuah Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', *Jurnal Empati*, 7.1 (2020), pp. 92–105.

life experiences of converts regarding the process of religious learning they received after marriage. This study is different from previous studies, both in terms of subject, purpose, and location of the study. The main objective of this study is to highlight the lives of individuals who change their religion for reasons of marriage, in contrast to previous studies that focused more on the life experiences of converts in general. This study is expected to be able to add insight or references to knowledge in religious studies.

Factors of Religious Conversion

Conversion to religious beliefs occurs based on belief in Islam that arises from interest and conformity of values, and is influenced by internal, external, and personal motivation factors in the process. There are several factors that encourage conversion to beliefs, including marriage factors⁹, guidance¹⁰, inner conflict¹¹, self-awareness¹², will¹³, and certain relationships.¹⁴ By understanding these factors, we can better appreciate the diversity of beliefs and spiritual journeys of each individual. It also emphasizes that conversion is a very personal and complex process, influenced by various considerations and life experiences.

Individual factors also play a role in influencing someone to change their religious beliefs. According to William James, psychologically, certain personality types can affect a person's inner state. Through his research, William James found that individuals with a melancholic personality type, who have deep emotional sensitivity, tend to be more susceptible to religious conversion.¹⁵

In addition to individual factors, social factors also influence conversion, as explained by Heirich. He stated that social influence is one of the main reasons why someone changes religion. There are several social factors that play a role, including: first, social interactions that influence each other between individuals; second, someone is invited to join a group that suits their preferences by a close friend; third, repeated invitations to attend religious activities; fourth,

⁹ Yunita Eka Dewi, *Perilaku Keagamaan Mualaf Karena Pernikahan Di Desa Suro Kecamatan Kalibagor Kabupaten Banyumas*, Skripsi (Purwokerto: UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, 2023).

¹⁰ Anita, 'Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada Keluarga Mualaf: Penelitian Terhadap Beberapa Keluarga Mualaf Di Kota Bandung'.

¹¹ Kurnial Ilahi and Jamaluddin Rabain, 'Konversi Agama (Kajian Teoritis Dan Empiris Terhadap Fenomena, Faktor, Dan Dampak Sosial Di Minangkabau)' (Kalimetro Inteligencia Media, 2017).

¹² Ilahi and Rabain, 'Konversi Agama (Kajian Teoritis Dan Empiris Terhadap Fenomena, Faktor, Dan Dampak Sosial Di Minangkabau)'.

¹³ Ilahi and Rabain, 'Konversi Agama (Kajian Teoritis Dan Empiris Terhadap Fenomena, Faktor, Dan Dampak Sosial Di Minangkabau)'.

¹⁴ Syamsul Arifin Bambang, 'Psikologi Agama', *CV. Pustaka Setia*, 2008.

¹⁵ Jalaluddin Rahmat, 'Pengantar Psikologi Agama (Edisi Revisi)', *Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada*, 2010.

encouragement from relatives or close friends during the process of finding a new faith; and fifth, having a special relationship with a religious leader before the conversion process.¹⁶

Meanwhile, according to Lewis, culture is also a factor that influences the conversion of religious beliefs. Lewis argues that culture shapes a person's intellectual mindset, norms, and spiritual life situation. Various cultural elements such as myths, rituals, and symbols provide life guidance that is often adopted unconsciously as a guide to life. These cultural factors include value systems, behaviors, and cultural structures that apply in society, such as perspectives, knowledge systems, economic pursuits, political or governmental aspects, arts, nations, and kinship relationships.¹⁷

Policies on Religious Conversion in Indonesia

Many religions have emerged and developed in the world, but historically, there are several religions that are practiced by the people of Indonesia. This is the background to the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 1/1965, which was later ratified as a law through Law No. 5/1969. The title of Law No. 1/1965 is "Prevention of Abuse and/or Blasphemy of Religion". However, in part II of the Explanation of this Presidential Decree, it is stated that the religions practiced by the people of Indonesia include Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Thus, this law is considered a form of official government recognition of the existence of these religions, which are then considered formal religions and become the basis for making various policies related to religion in Indonesia.¹⁸

The issue of religious freedom is also a topic of debate among Muslims. One of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that changing religion is part of human rights. However, for some Muslim religious leaders, this is contrary to Islamic teachings which prohibit a Muslim from leaving his religion. This debate does not only occur at the local level, but has also become a global issue, especially regarding the individual's right to choose or not to embrace a religion. Therefore, implementing policies that accommodate the principles of Human Rights in the context of religious freedom is not always easy to do. Factors such as socio-culture, level of religiosity, religious teachings, politics, and other elements also influence the process of formulating and implementing these policies.¹⁹

¹⁶ Max Heirich, 'Change of Heart: A Test of Some Widely Held Theories about Religious Conversion', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83.3 (1977), pp. 653–80.

¹⁷ Lewis Ray Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Abdul Syukur, 'Kebijakan Pemerintah Indonesia Tentang Agama: Kajian Atas Relasi Agama Dan Negara', *Sosio-Politica*, 1.2 (2012), pp. 1–13.

¹⁹ Muhammad Saifullah Rohman, 'Dinamika Implementasi Kebijakan Keagamaan Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya*, 20.2 (2018), pp. 287–96.

Regarding religious life in Indonesia and the policies that regulate it, the issue of defining religion is one of the main challenges. Religion in Indonesia is not only understood as a form of belief and obedience to God, but also as a communal identity that functions as a source of legitimacy, strength, and well-being. Policies regarding religion can be traced throughout Indonesia's history, from the colonial period to the modern era. Each government regime in Indonesia has different policies in regulating religious life in a very diverse and plural society.²⁰

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research that focuses on the personal experiences and thoughts of the participants.²¹ The method used is narrative inquiry, which allows researchers to understand the process of individual identity construction. This method was chosen because it can reveal and explore a person's life experiences in depth.²²

The initial stage in this research was carried out by collecting stories of participants' experiences related to the process of converting religions that they experienced. The researcher will start by asking participants to share their life stories, either through direct face-to-face interviews or through information from family or people around them. The data obtained will be analyzed and compared to ensure compliance with the participants' experiences.

The researcher then compiled a summary of the field data to identify research themes.²³ The participants involved consisted of two individuals with different backgrounds, namely brother DRB and Mrs. IR. Brother DRB, born in France in 1994, converted to Islam in 2017 after marrying a woman with the initials DM. Meanwhile, Mrs. IR, born in Podosugih village in 1985, converted to Islam in 2018 after marrying a Muslim man with the initials F.

The participant recruitment process was carried out with an initial approach through communication, followed by the preparation of a research certificate and a statement of willingness to ensure that participants were willing to contribute to the research.

The data collection method in this study was conducted through interviews. Interviews were used to obtain information from participants, where the researcher provided one initial question which then developed based on the participant's answers.²⁴ Data collected through interviews are usually verbal data from conversations or questions and answers. Therefore, written

²⁰ Rohman, 'Dinamika Implementasi Kebijakan Keagamaan Di Indonesia'.

²¹ John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

²² D Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine, 'Narrative Inquiry', in *Reviewing Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 166–79.

²³ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

²⁴ D Jean Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Sage publications, 2006).

interviews often have weaknesses. During the interview process, researchers are advised to use a recording device as a supporting instrument, but must first ensure that the participants do not mind the recording.²⁵

After the data is collected, the analysis is carried out through several stages. The first stage is to identify the main phenomenon to be explored according to the research problem. The second stage is to select certain individuals to study the phenomenon. The third stage involves collecting stories from these individuals. The fourth stage is to re-arrange or retell the stories that have been given by the participants. The fifth stage is carried out by collaborating with participants in developing the story. The sixth stage is to compile a narrative about the participant's experience. The last stage, namely the seventh stage, involves validation to ensure the accuracy of the narrative that has been compiled.²⁶

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A series of data obtained in this study were then described into a research result. The researcher has conducted interviews with two participants who told about their life experiences, especially related to the process of changing religious beliefs due to marriage. Of course, in the process of changing religious beliefs, the two participants have different stories of experiences. The following are the results of interviews with two participants reviewed from individual, social and cultural factors.

Individual Factors

In life, humans are always faced with various choices that require decision making that is considered most appropriate. According to Hurlock, a person tends to choose based on the interests they have, although these choices can also be influenced by social factors.²⁷ In this study, it was found that participants had known religious values, including Islam, since the beginning. This understanding was supported by various external factors, such as educational institutions, religious activities, religious family environments, changes in parental roles, and peer influence. However, the internal factors of participants or their individual aspects became the dominant influence in making these decisions.

The interview results show that there are similarities in the participants' responses to the process of changing religious beliefs, namely that one of the individual factors encourages the emergence of behavior in seeking and studying religious teachings.

²⁵ Tohirin, 'Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dalam Pendidikan Dan Bimbingan Konseling', 2012.

²⁶ Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*.

²⁷ Emma Indirawati, 'Hubungan Antara Kematangan Beragama Dengan Kecenderungan Strategi Coping', *Jurnal Psikologi*, 3.2 (2006), pp. 69–92.

"I was born to a Catholic mother and my father was an atheist or did not have a religion that he believed in. When I was little, I didn't know what my religion was because my parents never taught me about what religion was, how to enter a religion and all that. So at that time I didn't know anything about religion" (DRB, interview, July 10, 2024)

"I was born into a Christian family. On Sundays, sometimes my family takes me to church to perform Christian rituals or worship, sometimes not. Both of my parents are people who are not too religious but also not too indifferent to the religion they believe in" (IR, interview, July 11, 2024)

From the family background of DRB and IR participants who are not very religious or not very devout to the religion they believe in, and since birth the participants have never been directed or taught about a religion by their parents. So the participants feel confused and think about who they actually follow their religious beliefs to. The families of both participants adhere to ordinary religions or are not too fanatical. Just to have an identity, not to make religion a necessity that must be believed in for life. So they want to convert to any religion is not a problem. In this case, the participants are interested in digging deeper to learn about Islam after they marry a Muslim. From this experience, both participants began to go through the process of learning to understand Islam. This process is realized through observation of the daily habits they witness. This information search stage is emphasized by identifying and considering various alternatives based on personal values and interests, which ultimately lead them to decision making.²⁸ Thus, the decision to convert to Islam, accompanied by belief, is based on the appeal and suitability of perceived values. This decision also involves internal roles, such as cognitive processes and personal desires, in undergoing the process of converting.

Change in a positive direction is a step towards self-actualization, because every individual has the drive to develop the potential within themselves.²⁹ The researchers found that the participants' experiences, which involved cognitive processes and personal will, became the beginning of the formation of a new identity as a convert. This process then continued to the stage of self-development according to the new identity. According to Santrock, the formation of a person's self-identity is closely related to directed commitment and steadfastness in upholding the principles they believe in.³⁰ Both participants demonstrated the development of this commitment

²⁸ Brian J Zinnbauer and Kenneth I Pargament, 'Spiritual Conversion: A Study of Religious Change among College Students', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1998, pp. 161–80.

²⁹ Dewi, K. S. *Buku ajar kesehatan mental*. (Semarang: UPT Undip.2012). hlm. 52. <http://eprints.undip.ac.id>. Diakses pada hari Sabtu, 13 Agustus 2024.

³⁰ Santrock, J.W. *Life Span Development: Perkembangan Masa Hidup*. Edisi 5, Jilid 1. (Alih bahasa: Juda Damanik & Ahmad Chusairi). Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.2002. Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis-theory, method, and research*. London: Sage Publications.

through efforts to adapt to their new identities, both through independent learning and ongoing guidance. From the researcher's findings, this commitment was reflected in their seriousness in changing their daily lifestyles, being responsible for the decisions they made, and facing confusion by deepening their understanding of religion. This step not only helped them overcome the challenges that arose during the conversion process, but also strengthened their commitment to their decision to convert.

The journey of studying Islam that has been going on for quite a long time has enriched the subject's knowledge about Islamic teachings and values. This process includes internalizing human traits with religion, which involves experiencing faith, knowledge, skills, and values. The goal is to recognize and realize these values as a result of teachings that continue to interact continuously.³¹

One form of change that reflects the internalization of Islamic values in the lives of participants is seen in the choice of social circles, the ability to control oneself, understanding the philosophical aspects of worship, and the importance of maintaining friendship. This finding is in line with Syaiful Hamali's view that religious conversion has a positive impact on individuals, which is marked by changes in outlook on life, optimistic and open attitudes, appreciation for inclusive theology, and self-awareness in facing disasters.³²

The researchers also found various manifestations experienced by both subjects after going through the process of becoming a convert. One of the benefits felt by the subjects, which further strengthened their belief in the decision to convert, was a special experience that was unique to each participant. According to Glock and Stark, religious experience includes dimensions related to feelings, perceptions, and spiritual sensations that a person feels.³³

Both participants reported experiences such as receiving guidance, feeling pleasure, admiration, happiness, regret, and gratitude. Other benefits are reflected in more mature self-development. From the results of this study, researchers found that the process of converting had a positive impact on converts, including the ability to better control behavior, become more careful in acting, and form a personality that is in accordance with the values of a Muslim man and woman.

Social Factors

One of the external factors that influence the process of religious conversion is the family environment. The family is the most basic social unit in human life, consisting of father, mother, and children. For a child, the family is the first social environment he knows. Therefore, family life

³¹ Titian Hakiki and Rudi Cahyono, 'Komitmen Beragama Pada Muallaf (Studi Kasus Pada Muallaf Usia Dewasa)', *Jurnal Psikologi Klinis Dan Kesehatan Mental*, 4.1 (2015), pp. 20–28.

³² Syaiful Hamali, 'Dampak Konversi Agama Terhadap Sikap Dan Tingkah Laku Keagamaan Individu', *Al-Adyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama*, 7.2 (2012), pp. 21–40.

³³ Glock & Stark (1969). *Religion and society intention*. California: Rand Mc Nally Company.

plays an important role as the initial phase of socialization in the formation of a person's religious soul. If parents in the family environment do not play a role in instilling religious values in children, it is not impossible that the child will grow up in confusion. This can encourage him, when he reaches adulthood, to undertake a spiritual search which can ultimately lead to the process of religious conversion. The researcher's findings, that the first participant (DRB) converted because he never received direction or lessons from his family about the religion he believed in. While the second participant (IR) converted because of a family background that had an ordinary attitude towards the religion he believed in. The family only made religion an identity, not something to believe in or believe in.

“My journey to becoming a convert was very long and full of struggles. From me who had never studied and embraced or studied any religion, it immediately changed drastically after I embraced Islam. I met my wife and at that time I was still a Catholic just for identity. We met at an activity or volunteer community to teach children. At that time I was sent to Indonesia by a community in France” (DRB, interview, July 10, 2024)

“The story of my journey to Islam is very long, but in short, it is like this. I wanted to gain knowledge and experience in another city, namely Jakarta. I asked my parents' permission to work abroad in Jakarta. In Jakarta, I applied for a job at a factory as an employee in the textile sector. Long story short, after I worked for about 2 years at the factory, I finally met my husband who happened to be in the same factory, but my husband was in the HRD department. My husband was also a new employee at the factory. We got to know each other, often ate together, hung out together, and went to the factory together. We met and chatted every day. After that, we opened up to each other and chatted about many things, especially related to the beliefs or religions that each of us adhered to. I asked my husband what his religion was and my husband answered Islam. Then my husband asked me back what his religion was, and I answered Christian.”(IR, interview, July 11, 2024)

In addition to the family environment, the institutional environment also plays an important role in shaping the development of a person's religious soul. The institutional environment can be a formal institution such as a school or other organizations and associations. Schools as formal institutions also contribute to helping the development of a person's personality. The research findings show that both participants decided to convert because they met someone who was Muslim through an organization or work. The relationship then developed until it ended in marriage.

The process of conversion experienced by the participants was based on love for their partners, without any element of coercion. The success of the marriage that has lasted more than

five years proves that this conversion is not only to fulfill the mandate of the constitution, but also rooted in sincere love. Participants did not face doubts or complicated phases before deciding to convert to Islam after marriage. This shows that they have gone through a process of externalization to their social environment long before converting. This process allows for the internalization of Islamic values and norms that are manifested in everyday life.

The main difference between the two participants in their conversion background lies in the externalization activities that influenced their adaptation to Islam as a new faith. Participant DRB, a French citizen, got to know Islam through his activities as a teaching volunteer. After marrying his wife, who is the daughter of a kyai, DRB practiced Islamic teachings deeply and easily accepted the teachings. Meanwhile, participant IR quickly accepted Islam because he had many Muslim friends and received full blessings from his parents who had a Christian background, so that the conversion process went smoothly.

From a sociological perspective, the ease with which participants convert is due to close and mutually influential social relationships. These interactions create attitudes and behaviors that tend to conform to the ideas and actions of the dominant group in their social environment.³⁴

Cultural Factors

Culture in a society is a set of values that serve as a guideline for the individuals who adhere to it. As a frame of reference for acting and behaving, culture often develops into a tradition in society. This tradition tends to be difficult to change because it has been deeply integrated into the daily life of the community.

Based on the researcher's findings related to the cultural factors experienced by the two participants during the process of converting to religion, the DRB participant initially found it very difficult to adapt to his environment. This was all because previously the participant had never followed religious teachings like this, only learning from books and other people's stories. After the participant converted to Islam and felt how difficult it was to read the verses of the Qur'an and follow the Koran every day. The DRB participant revealed that it took him a long time to adapt to the environment of his father-in-law's Islamic boarding school. The participant felt overwhelmed following it, but the participant was always encouraged by his wife so that the participant would not give up. Every day having to wear long-sleeved clothes, wearing sarongs, wearing peci all made the participant uncomfortable at first. Going to congregational prayers at the mosque every time seemed like there was no rest. The participant revealed that after studying and converting to Islam, it was very difficult at first. In addition, the participant also found it very difficult to adapt in terms

³⁴ Ian Craib, *Teori-Teori Sosial Modern: Dari Parsons Sampai Habermas* (PT Raja Grafindo Persada, 1994).

of food. Because the food at his wife's residence is very different from the daily food in France. In addition, the weather is also very hot. The customs are also very different. In terms of clothing, how to greet guests, go to the mosque, go to study the Koran, everything is very different from the participants' lives before converting to Islam or when they were Catholic.

"Oh yes, at first I had a hard time adapting here, because I had never followed religious teachings like this before. After I converted to Islam and felt how difficult it was to read the verses of the Qur'an and follow the Koran reading every day. It all requires strong intentions and mentality"(DRB, interview, July 10, 2024)

"Emm, it was quite easy to adapt. Because when I was little, there were already many Muslim people in my environment." (IR, interview, July 11, 2024)

From different cultures before and after converting to Islam, it made the participants very, very surprised. However, the participants remained enthusiastic in carrying out the rules or norms that apply in Islam. Unlike the IR participants, it was actually very easy to adapt to their environment after becoming converts. This was because when the participants were little in their environment there were many Muslim people and they saw their habits in performing worship or celebrating big days. So the participants were not too surprised or had difficulty in adapting. In the environment where the participants worked, there were also many Muslims, the participants were used to seeing them worship. It's just that for the adaptation to performing the 5 daily prayers, they still felt confused and had difficulty. Especially in terms of reading the readings in their prayers because there were so many readings. So participants sometimes forgot and sometimes didn't memorize them either. In addition, adapting to wearing a mukena, it was also quite difficult. Because the clothes are closed and big, it makes it hot when worn for worship. Then the habit of wearing a headscarf if you want to go anywhere. Participants felt it was very difficult at first because wearing a headscarf in hot weather was very uncomfortable according to the participants. But in Islam, it is obligatory for women to cover their aurat. So no matter how hard it is to wear it, it must still be worn because it is an obligation. After getting used to it, you can finally feel comfortable wearing the hijab.

For adaptation in society, participants also felt very easy and there were no obstacles, participants were often invited to pray in congregation at the mosque with their husbands. Then invited to religious studies at the mosque too, invited to the maulid event. Participants felt happy because many friends and people attended these events. And they were very kind, then after the event was over they distributed snacks, sometimes also rice and there was also hot tea. Participants felt happy when attending religious studies events with the surrounding community. Participants were also not surprised by the customs or culture in this Islamic religion. Because participants have

been accustomed to living in an environment with people who are also Muslims since childhood. So they are used to the habits taught in Islam.

The Malay proverb says, “where the earth is stepped on, where the sky is upheld,” conveying the message that a person can live in a place if they are able to adapt to their environment. The environment in question includes holistic aspects, including the physical, biological and socio-cultural environment. The environment, including culture, has a major influence in shaping a person’s personality. Personality is basically a consistent pattern of behavior that is formed from the history of reinforcement experienced. Individual attitude and behavior patterns emerge because of reinforcement or appreciation from society for certain behaviors, while other behaviors do not receive the same reinforcement.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and all the presentations, the researcher has come to the final conclusion that the two participants who carried out the process of changing their religious beliefs were influenced by several factors, namely 1) individual factors, due to the participant's family who was not very religious or not very devout to the religion they believed in, and since birth the participants were never directed or taught about a religion by their parents. 2) social factors, that the two participants changed their religion because they met someone who was Muslim in an organization and in a field of work. 3) cultural factors, that initially the participants found it very difficult to adapt to the culture in their environment, because previously the participants had never followed the teachings of Islam and only learned from books and other people's stories.

Through this conclusion, the researcher would like to convey that this study still has limitations. However, this study is expected to be one of the references or considerations for further research to explore more deeply regarding individual, social, and cultural factors in the process of religious conversion: the life experiences of converts in Indonesia.

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