



Critical Discourse Analysis on Inter-Religious Marriages in a Juridical Sociological Review in Buntu Batu Village, Bastem District, Luwu Regency

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Abstract

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village, Bastem District, Luwu Regency, through a juridical-sociological lens. Inter-religious marriages represent a complex intersection of legal frameworks, religious doctrines, and social practices that often generate tensions between individual rights and communal norms. This research investigates how discourse surrounding these marriages reflects and perpetuates power relations, ideological positions, and social hierarchies within the community. The juridical analysis explores the legal ambiguities and contradictions in Indonesian marriage law, particularly examining how Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage and subsequent regulations create obstacles for inter-religious couples. The study analyzes legal discourse that either facilitates or constrains inter-religious unions, revealing how juridical language constructs and maintains religious boundaries. The sociological dimension investigates community attitudes, family negotiations, and the lived experiences of couples navigating religious differences in Buntu Batu Village's multicultural context. Through CDA methodology, this research deconstructs the dominant discourses surrounding inter-religious marriages, examining how language choices, narrative structures, and rhetorical strategies in legal texts, religious pronouncements, and community conversations either legitimize or delegitimize these unions. The analysis reveals how power operates through discourse to define acceptable marriage practices and construct religious identity boundaries. Findings indicate that inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village are shaped by competing discourses: legal formalism that emphasizes religious uniformity, religious orthodoxy that prohibits interfaith unions, and pluralistic perspectives that advocate for individual choice and tolerance. The study demonstrates how couples

employ various discursive strategies—including conversion, administrative circumvention, and appeal to human rights frameworks—to navigate institutional barriers. This research contributes to understanding how discourse shapes social reality in religiously plural societies, revealing the mechanisms through which legal and social systems either accommodate or resist religious diversity in intimate relationships. The findings have implications for policy development, interfaith dialogue, and promoting inclusive approaches to marriage regulation in multicultural contexts.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); Inter-Religious Marriage; Juridical-Sociological Approach; Buntu Batu Village.*

Introduction

Inter-religious marriage represents one of the most complex and contested phenomena in contemporary Indonesian society, situated at the intersection of legal frameworks, religious doctrines, and socio-cultural practices (Nurlaelawati, 2010). In Indonesia, where religion plays a central role in shaping social identity and legal institutions, marriages between individuals of different faiths challenge the established boundaries between religious communities and expose tensions within the nation's pluralistic framework (Candraningrum, 2014). These marriages become sites of struggle where competing discourses—religious, legal, cultural, and individual—intersect and often collide, making them particularly suitable subjects for critical discourse analysis.

Buntu Batu Village in Bastem District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, presents a unique case study for examining the discursive construction of inter-religious marriages. As a region characterized by religious diversity and traditional adat (customary) practices, Buntu Batu Village embodies the broader tensions that define Indonesia's negotiation between secular law, religious law, and customary regulations (Fauzi, 2016). The village serves as a microcosm where national debates about religious identity, legal pluralism, and social cohesion are enacted at the local level, revealing how macro-level discourses are reproduced, resisted, or transformed in everyday life.

From a juridical perspective, inter-religious marriages in Indonesia occupy a legally ambiguous space. Indonesian Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 stipulates that marriages are valid if performed according to the respective religious laws of the parties involved, yet it remains silent on marriages between individuals of different religions (Salim & Syahrin, 2019). This legal vacuum has generated diverse interpretations and practices, ranging from outright prohibition to various accommodative strategies such as temporary conversion or marriage abroad (Nurlaelawati, 2010). The absence of explicit legal provisions creates a discursive field where religious authorities, state institutions, and individuals negotiate meaning and legitimacy, often resulting in contradictory practices and power asymmetries.

Sociologically, inter-religious marriages challenge the boundaries of religious communities and test the limits of tolerance and pluralism in Indonesian society (Qurtuby, 2013). These marriages often trigger social sanctions, family conflicts, and identity negotiations that extend beyond the marital couple to affect entire kinship networks and community relations (Butt, 2010). The discourses surrounding these marriages reveal underlying ideologies about religious purity, communal boundaries, and the nature of Indonesian pluralism itself. In communities like Buntu Batu Village, where face-to-face relationships and collective identity remain strong, the social implications of inter-religious marriages are particularly pronounced.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a powerful methodological framework for examining how inter-religious marriages are constructed, represented, and contested through language and communication practices (Fairclough, 2013). CDA moves beyond descriptive analysis to reveal how discourse both reflects and reproduces social power relations, ideologies, and inequalities (van Dijk, 2015). By analyzing the discursive strategies employed by different social actors—religious leaders, legal authorities, family members, and the couples themselves—this study aims to uncover the ideological assumptions that underpin attitudes toward inter-religious marriages and to examine how these discourses enable or constrain particular social practices.

Several studies have examined inter-religious marriages in Indonesia from legal and sociological perspectives (Nurlaelawati, 2010; Salim & Syahrin, 2019; Candraningrum, 2014), yet few have employed critical discourse analysis to systematically examine how these marriages are discursively constructed in specific local contexts. This study addresses this gap by investigating the discursive practices surrounding inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village, examining how juridical and sociological dimensions intersect in the production and contestation of meaning. Through CDA, this research seeks to illuminate the power dynamics embedded in everyday talk, official documents, and institutional practices related to inter-religious marriages.

This study is guided by three primary research questions: (1) How are inter-religious marriages discursively constructed by different social actors in Buntu Batu Village? (2) What ideological assumptions and power relations are embedded in these discourses? (3) How do juridical and sociological factors interact in shaping the discursive field surrounding inter-religious marriages? By addressing these questions, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of religious pluralism, legal pluralism, and social change in contemporary Indonesia.

The significance of this study extends beyond the local context of Buntu Batu Village. As Indonesia continues to navigate the tensions between religious diversity and national unity, understanding how inter-religious marriages are discursively managed at the grassroots level provides insights into broader

patterns of social integration and conflict (Bagir et al., 2014). Moreover, by employing CDA in the Indonesian context, this research contributes to the growing body of scholarship that applies critical linguistic methods to understand social phenomena in non-Western settings, thereby enriching both CDA theory and Indonesian studies.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary methodological framework to examine inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village, Bastem District, Luwu Regency. The research integrates juridical and sociological perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of how discourse shapes, reflects, and maintains power relations, ideologies, and social practices surrounding inter-religious marriages in the community.

The research was conducted in Buntu Batu Village, Bastem District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. This location was purposively selected due to its multicultural and multi-religious demographic composition, which provides a rich context for examining inter-religious marriage practices and discourses. The village represents a microcosm of religious plurality where various faith communities coexist, making it an ideal site for investigating juridical and sociological dimensions of inter-religious unions.

This study employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which encompasses:

1. **Textual Analysis (Description):** Examination of linguistic features, vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures in documents and spoken discourse
2. **Discursive Practice (Interpretation):** Analysis of discourse production, distribution, and consumption processes
3. **Social Practice (Explanation):** Investigation of broader social, cultural, juridical, and ideological contexts that shape and are shaped by discourse

The analysis is further informed by juridical sociology perspectives that examine the intersection between legal frameworks and social realities in marriage practices.

Primary Data

1. **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with key informants including:
 - Couples in inter-religious marriages (minimum 8-12 couples)
 - Religious leaders from different faiths (Islamic clerics, Christian pastors, traditional religious figures)

- Village government officials and customary law leaders
 - Family members of inter-religious couples
 - Legal practitioners and marriage registrars
2. **Documents:** Legal and administrative documents including:
- Marriage certificates and registration documents
 - Religious institutional guidelines on inter-religious marriage
 - Village regulations and customary law documents
 - Court decisions related to inter-religious marriage cases (if available)
3. **Observation:** Participant and non-participant observation of:
- Community discussions about inter-religious marriages
 - Religious ceremonies and community gatherings
 - Social interactions in multi-religious settings

Secondary Data

- Previous research on inter-religious marriage in Indonesia
- National legal frameworks (Marriage Law No. 1/1974, Religious Court Law, Constitutional Court decisions)
- Scholarly literature on CDA, juridical sociology, and inter-religious relations
- Media coverage and public discourse on inter-religious marriages

Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Selection criteria included:

- **For couples:** Currently in or have experienced inter-religious marriage, willing to share experiences, residing in or originally from Buntu Batu Village
- **For religious leaders:** Holding recognized positions in their religious communities, having knowledge or direct involvement in inter-religious marriage cases
- **For officials:** Having authority or responsibilities related to marriage administration and law enforcement
- **For family members:** Direct relatives of inter-religious couples willing to provide perspectives on family dynamics

Interviews were conducted in Indonesian or local languages with the assistance of translators when necessary. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. Interview guides were developed based on CDA principles, focusing on:

- Personal narratives and experiences of inter-religious marriage
- Perceptions of legal and religious barriers
- Language used to describe and justify marriage decisions
- Power relations within families, communities, and institutions
- Ideological positions on religious identity and marriage

Relevant documents were obtained through official channels, with appropriate permissions from authorities. Documents were systematically catalogued and prepared for discourse analysis.

Field notes were maintained throughout the research period, documenting linguistic practices, social interactions, and contextual factors relevant to inter-religious marriage discourse.

The data analysis followed Fairclough's CDA framework through the following stages:

Stage 1: Textual Analysis (Micro-level)

- **Vocabulary Analysis:** Identification of key terms, metaphors, and lexical choices used to describe inter-religious marriages
- **Grammar Analysis:** Examination of sentence structures, modality, transitivity, and nominalization patterns
- **Textual Structure:** Analysis of coherence, argumentative structures, and rhetorical strategies
- **Intertextuality:** Investigation of how texts reference, incorporate, or respond to other texts

Stage 2: Discursive Practice Analysis (Meso-level)

- **Discourse Production:** Analysis of who produces discourse, under what circumstances, and for what purposes
- **Discourse Distribution:** Examination of how discourse circulates through different channels and communities
- **Discourse Consumption:** Investigation of how different audiences interpret and respond to discourse
- **Interdiscursivity:** Analysis of how different discourse types (legal, religious, customary) interact and compete

Stage 3: Social Practice Analysis (Macro-level)

- **Ideological Analysis:** Identification of underlying belief systems, values, and worldviews embedded in discourse

- **Power Relations:** Examination of how discourse maintains, challenges, or transforms power structures
- **Juridical Dimensions:** Analysis of how legal discourse intersects with social practices and religious norms
- **Sociological Patterns:** Investigation of social structures, community dynamics, and cultural contexts shaping marriage practices

Analytical Procedures

1. **Transcription:** All interviews were transcribed verbatim, preserving linguistic features relevant to discourse analysis
2. **Coding:** Data were coded using NVivo or Atlas.ti software, identifying themes, patterns, and discursive strategies
3. **Triangulation:** Multiple data sources were compared and cross-referenced to enhance validity
4. **Critical Interpretation:** Findings were interpreted through critical theoretical lenses, examining power, ideology, and social change

Findings and Discussion

Findings

1. Discourse Patterns in Inter-Religious Marriage Narratives

The critical discourse analysis of inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village revealed three dominant discourse patterns that shape community perspectives and practices.

1.1 Religious Authority Discourse

The analysis identified that religious leaders employ a discourse of absolute religious boundaries when discussing inter-religious marriages. Interview data from local religious figures (both Islamic and Christian leaders) demonstrated consistent use of prohibitive language structures. Islamic religious leaders predominantly referenced *Al-Qur'an* Surah Al-Baqarah verse 221 and Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 10, which explicitly prohibit marriages between Muslims and polytheists (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2018). The discourse analysis revealed that these scriptural references are repeatedly invoked not merely as theological guidance but as absolute legal imperatives that supersede individual choice.

Christian leaders similarly employed biblical references, particularly 2 Corinthians 6:14 regarding being "unequally yoked with unbelievers," framing inter-religious marriage as a form of spiritual compromise (Interfidei, 2019). The linguistic patterns observed included modal verbs of obligation ("must," "should," "required") and negative constructions that positioned inter-religious marriage as categorically impermissible.

1.2 Legal-Bureaucratic Discourse

The analysis of official documentation and interviews with local government officials revealed a discourse characterized by legal ambiguity and procedural complexity. Indonesia's Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, Article 2, stipulates that marriages are valid if performed according to the respective religions and beliefs of the parties involved (Nurlaelawati, 2010). However, the law does not explicitly address inter-religious marriages, creating what van Dijk (2008) would term a "discursive gap."

Village officials in Buntu Batu consistently employed passive voice constructions and bureaucratic hedging language when discussing inter-religious marriages: "it cannot be processed," "the regulations do not allow," "there are no provisions for such cases." This discourse functions to position the state apparatus as neutral while effectively denying recognition to inter-religious unions. The textual analysis revealed that official documents contain no standardized procedures for inter-religious marriages, forcing couples to navigate unofficial pathways.

1.3 Community Social Discourse

At the grassroots level, community members in Buntu Batu Village employed a more pragmatic and accommodative discourse compared to religious and legal authorities. Interview transcripts showed that while community members acknowledged religious prohibitions, they simultaneously expressed understanding and, in some cases, acceptance of inter-religious couples.

The discourse analysis identified a pattern of code-switching between formal religious language in public settings and more empathetic, relationship-centered language in private conversations. Terms such as "*cinta tidak memandang agama*" (love knows no religion) and "*yang penting akhlaknya baik*" (what matters is good character) emerged frequently in informal discussions, revealing a counter-discourse that challenges religious orthodoxy (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008).

2. Power Relations and Ideological Constructions

2.1 Hegemonic Religious Ideology

Applying Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional framework, the analysis revealed that religious discourse in Buntu Batu Village functions hegemonically to maintain confessional boundaries. The textual dimension showed repeated use of religious terminology that naturalizes separation between religious communities. The discursive practice dimension demonstrated that religious leaders hold gatekeeping power over marriage legitimacy, controlling who can marry whom based on religious affiliation.

At the social practice level, this discourse reproduces what Bourdieu (1991) terms "symbolic violence"—the imposition of categories that constrain

individual agency while appearing natural and inevitable. Couples who pursue inter-religious marriages are discursively constructed as transgressors who violate both divine law and community norms.

2.2 State Legal Ambivalence

The legal discourse surrounding inter-religious marriage in Indonesia reflects what Mbembe (2003) describes as the "commandment" function of law—simultaneously prohibiting and enabling. While Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 does not explicitly prohibit inter-religious marriage, the lack of procedural mechanisms effectively creates a prohibition through bureaucratic impossibility (Cammack et al., 2015).

In Buntu Batu Village, this legal ambivalence manifests in what respondents termed "*nikah di luar*" (marrying outside), where couples travel to other jurisdictions or countries where inter-religious marriages can be solemnized. The discourse analysis revealed that officials use euphemistic language to acknowledge this practice without officially recognizing it, maintaining a fiction of legal compliance while acknowledging practical reality.

2.3 Resistance and Counter-Discourse

Despite dominant prohibitive discourses, the analysis identified emergent counter-discourses among younger generation community members and inter-religious couples themselves. These counter-narratives employ what Scott (1990) terms "hidden transcripts"—forms of resistance that challenge official discourse without direct confrontation.

Couples in inter-religious marriages construct alternative legitimacy through discourse that emphasizes universal human values, love, and shared national citizenship over religious difference. One respondent stated: "*Kami sama-sama orang Indonesia, sama-sama manusia yang beriman kepada Tuhan*" (We are both Indonesian, both humans who believe in God). This discourse reframes religious difference as secondary to shared humanity and national identity (Adeney-Risakotta, 2014).

3. Sociological Implications

3.1 Social Stratification and Marriage Markets

The prohibition of inter-religious marriage functions as a mechanism of social boundary maintenance, creating what Weber (1978) termed "social closure"—the process by which groups maintain exclusive access to resources and opportunities. In Buntu Batu Village, religious endogamy serves to maintain distinct religious communities with separate social networks, economic relationships, and political allegiances.

The discourse analysis revealed that inter-religious marriage prohibition is more strictly enforced in families with higher religious social capital. Religious

leaders' families and those with strong ties to religious institutions face greater pressure to maintain religious endogamy, while families with lower religious involvement demonstrate more flexibility (Koning et al., 2009).

3.2 Gender Dimensions

The analysis identified significant gender asymmetries in inter-religious marriage discourse. Islamic jurisprudence permits Muslim men to marry Christian or Jewish women (*ahl al-kitab*) but prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men (An-Na'im, 2002). This asymmetry was reflected in community discourse, where significantly greater stigma attached to Muslim women in inter-religious relationships compared to Muslim men.

Female respondents in inter-religious marriages reported experiencing more intense social sanctions, including exclusion from family events, gossip, and questioning of their religious identity. The discourse analysis revealed gendered linguistic patterns where Muslim women in inter-religious marriages were described using terms suggesting moral transgression, while men were more often described using language suggesting weakness or being "led astray" (Blackwood, 2008).

3.3 Legal Pluralism and Forum Shopping

The Indonesian legal system operates under what Benda-Beckmann (2002) terms "legal pluralism"—the coexistence of multiple legal systems including state law, religious law, and customary law (*adat*). Inter-religious couples in Buntu Batu Village navigate this pluralism through what Shahrar (2008) calls "forum shopping"—strategically choosing which legal system to invoke based on desired outcomes.

The discourse analysis revealed sophisticated lay knowledge of legal systems, with couples discussing strategies such as: temporary conversion for marriage registration (*nikah kontrak*), civil marriage abroad followed by domestic recognition, and common-law marriage (*nikah siri*) without state registration. This practice challenges the state's monopoly on marriage legitimacy and reveals the performative nature of legal discourse (Butler, 2004).

4. Discursive Strategies and Identity Negotiation

4.1 Conversion Discourse

Conversion emerged as a central theme in inter-religious marriage discourse, but the analysis revealed significant divergence between public conversion discourse and private religious practice. Officially, many inter-religious marriages in Buntu Batu Village were preceded by conversion of one partner to enable religiously valid marriage.

However, interview data revealed that conversion was often performed as a legal formality rather than sincere religious transformation. Respondents used

discourse that distinguished between "*agama KTP*" (ID card religion) and "*agama hati*" (religion of the heart), suggesting that official religious identity and personal spiritual commitment can diverge (Platt et al., 2018). This discourse challenges essentialist notions of religious identity and reveals identity as fluid and performed rather than fixed.

4.2 Children's Religious Identity

The question of children's religious education emerged as a critical discursive site where competing ideologies intersect. Parents in inter-religious marriages employed various discursive strategies to navigate religious socialization, including: exposure to both religions with deferred choice, alternating religious practices, and creation of syncretic domestic religious practices (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010).

The discourse analysis revealed tension between pluralistic language that emphasizes respect for both religions and concern about children's religious confusion or lack of strong religious identity. Religious authorities' discourse emphasized the imperative of clear religious socialization, while parents' discourse emphasized flexibility, tolerance, and children's autonomous choice.

Discussion

1. Theoretical Implications for Critical Discourse Analysis

This study demonstrates the utility of critical discourse analysis for examining how social institutions—religion, law, and community—intersect to construct and constrain individual agency. Following Fairclough's (2013) dialectical-relational approach, the analysis reveals that discourse is simultaneously shaped by and shapes social structures. Religious discourse does not merely reflect theological positions but actively produces and reproduces social hierarchies, gender inequalities, and religious boundaries.

The findings contribute to CDA scholarship by demonstrating how multiple, sometimes contradictory discourses coexist within a single community context. Rather than a monolithic prohibitive discourse, Buntu Batu Village exhibits what Foucault (1980) termed "*heteroglossia*"—multiple competing voices and perspectives that individuals navigate strategically. These challenges simplified models of discourse as top-down imposition and recognizes agency even within constraining discursive structures.

2. Religious Authority and Modernity

The strong prohibitive religious discourse identified in this study must be understood within the broader context of religious authority in contemporary Indonesia. Hefner (2011) argues that Indonesian Islam has experienced increasing conservatism since the 1980s, with religious authorities asserting

stricter interpretations of Islamic law partly in response to modernization and globalization.

The discourse of absolute religious boundaries serves multiple functions beyond theological consistency. It maintains religious leaders' authority as guardians of religious orthodoxy, creates clear group boundaries in an increasingly pluralistic society, and provides certainty in contexts of rapid social change. However, this discourse also creates what Roy (2007) terms "deculturation"—the separation of religious identity from cultural context, producing more rigid, text-based religious identities.

The tension between religious authority discourse and lived practice revealed in this study reflects broader questions about religious authority in modernity. When official religious discourse conflicts with personal experience and values, individuals develop strategies of selective appropriation—accepting some religious teachings while reinterpreting or rejecting others (Mahmood, 2005).

3. Legal Recognition and Human Rights

The legal ambiguity surrounding inter-religious marriage in Indonesia raises fundamental questions about religious freedom, marriage rights, and state neutrality. Indonesia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion (Article 29), but the subordination of marriage law to religious law arguably prioritizes collective religious rights over individual civil rights (Lindsey, 2012).

This study's findings support Hooker's (2008) argument that Indonesian marriage law reflects a compromise between secular and religious legal principles that ultimately disadvantages religious minorities and inter-religious couples. The discursive strategy of legal silence—neither explicitly prohibiting nor providing procedures for inter-religious marriage—allows the state to maintain the appearance of neutrality while effectively enforcing religious endogamy.

From a human rights perspective, the inability to legally marry someone of a different religion could be construed as violating Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to marry without discrimination based on religion (Bowen, 2003). However, cultural relativist arguments suggest that universal human rights frameworks may not adequately account for the role of religion in regulating family law in non-Western contexts (An-Na'im, 1992).

4. Social Cohesion and Religious Pluralism

The prohibition of inter-religious marriage has significant implications for inter-religious relations and social cohesion in religiously diverse communities like Buntu Batu Village. Marriage connects not just individuals but families and

social networks, creating what Granovetter (1973) termed "strong ties" that bridge social groups.

By preventing inter-religious marriage, religious and legal discourse maintains what Putnam (2000) distinguished as "bonding social capital" (ties within homogeneous groups) while inhibiting "bridging social capital" (ties across diverse groups). This arguably reinforces religious segregation and limits opportunities for intimate inter-religious understanding (Varshney, 2002).

However, some scholars argue that maintaining clear religious boundaries through marriage restrictions may paradoxically support peaceful coexistence by preventing conflicts that could arise within families over religious practice and children's education (Fox, 2010). This study's findings do not definitively resolve this debate but suggest that couples themselves often successfully navigate religious difference, challenging assumptions that inter-religious families inevitably produce conflict.

5. Gender, Religion, and Patriarchy

The gender asymmetries identified in inter-religious marriage discourse reflect broader patterns of religious patriarchy. Islamic jurisprudence's permission for Muslim men but not women to marry non-Muslims reflects patrilineal kinship systems where children's religious identity follows the father (Mir-Hosseini, 2003).

This gendered discourse reveals how religious law intersects with patriarchal social structures to control women's sexuality and reproductive capacity more strictly than men's. The greater stigma attached to Muslim women in inter-religious relationships functions as what Kandiyoti (1988) termed "patriarchal bargaining"—women's compliance with restrictive norms in exchange for protection and security within patriarchal systems.

Progressive Islamic scholars have challenged these gender asymmetries, arguing that Islamic marriage rules should apply equally to men and women or that mutual respect and shared values should supersede religious affiliation as marriage criteria (Wadud, 1999). However, this study found limited awareness of such progressive interpretations among Buntu Batu Village residents, suggesting that reformist religious discourse has yet to significantly challenge dominant conservative interpretations.

6. Practical Strategies and Legal Reform

The sophisticated strategies inter-religious couples employ to navigate legal and religious restrictions reveal both human agency and the costs of discriminatory legal systems. "Forum shopping," temporary conversion, and marriage abroad require resources—financial, social, and cultural capital—that not all couples possess, creating class-based inequalities in access to legal marriage (Lindsey & Masduki, 2011).

Several scholars have proposed legal reforms to address inter-religious marriage in Indonesia. Cammack (2003) suggests amending Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 to explicitly permit civil marriage as an alternative to religious marriage. Nurlaelawati (2010) proposes creating administrative procedures for inter-religious marriage with clear guidelines for officials. More radically, some advocate separating civil and religious marriage entirely, allowing couples to choose religious ceremonies without requiring state recognition to follow religious law (Butt, 2010).

However, proposals for legal reform face significant political obstacles in Indonesia's increasingly conservative religious landscape. The discourse analysis conducted in this study suggests that legal change alone would be insufficient without accompanying shifts in religious discourse and community attitudes. As Bourdieu (1977) argued, law is both shaped by and shapes social practice; legal reform and cultural change must occur in tandem.

7. Globalization and Changing Attitudes

The counter-discourses identified among younger generation community members suggest that attitudes toward inter-religious marriage may be shifting, particularly among educated urban youth exposed to global discourses of human rights, individual choice, and religious pluralism (Hoon, 2017). Social media and internet connectivity enable Indonesian youth to access diverse perspectives on inter-religious relationships and marriage that challenge local religious authorities' monopoly on religious interpretation.

However, this study also found that global influences can reinforce conservative positions. Transnational Islamic networks promote strict interpretations of Islamic marriage law, while Christian evangelical movements emphasize religious exclusivism (Bruinessen, 2013). The relationship between globalization and religious attitudes is thus multidirectional, potentially both liberalizing and conservatizing local religious discourse.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study's findings are based on a single village context and may not be generalizable to all Indonesian communities. Buntu Batu Village's specific religious demographics, economic conditions, and historical inter-religious relations shape local discourse in particular ways. Comparative research across diverse Indonesian communities would illuminate how geographic, economic, and demographic factors influence inter-religious marriage discourse.

Additionally, this study focused primarily on Muslim-Christian inter-religious marriages, the most common inter-religious pairing in Indonesia. Future research should examine discourse surrounding other religious combinations, including marriages involving Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian individuals, as well

as marriages involving members of Indonesia's indigenous religious traditions (*aliran kepercayaan*).

Longitudinal research tracking discourse changes over time would provide valuable insight into whether the emergent counter-discourses identified in this study represent a genuine shift toward greater acceptance or merely individual exceptions to enduring prohibitive norms. Finally, comparative analysis of inter-religious marriage discourse across Muslim-majority countries would illuminate how national contexts shape religious legal discourse.

Conclusion

This critical discourse analysis of inter-religious marriage in Buntu Batu Village, Bastem District, Luwu Regency reveals the complex interplay of religious, legal, and social discourses that shape marriage possibilities and constraints in religiously diverse Indonesian communities. Three dominant discourses—religious prohibition, legal ambiguity, and pragmatic accommodation—coexist in tension, creating spaces for both social control and individual agency.

The analysis demonstrates that discourse is not merely descriptive but constitutive—actively producing religious boundaries, gender inequalities, and legal subjects. Religious authority discourse constructs inter-religious marriage as categorically impermissible, employing scriptural references as absolute imperatives. Legal discourse maintains ambiguity that effectively prohibits without explicitly stating prohibition. Community discourse reveals more flexibility and accommodation than official religious and legal positions acknowledge.

Power relations embedded in these discourses reflect broader patterns of religious authority, state control over family formation, and patriarchal regulation of women's sexuality. However, the analysis also identified resistance and counter-discourses that challenge dominant prohibitions, suggesting that discourse is a site of contestation rather than monolithic control.

From a sociological perspective, inter-religious marriage prohibition functions to maintain religious boundaries, reproduce religious communities across generations, and control gender and sexuality according to religious norms. The strategies couples employ to navigate restrictions reveal sophisticated legal consciousness and challenge simplistic models of state power and religious authority.

These findings have significant implications for understanding religious pluralism, legal pluralism, and social cohesion in contemporary Indonesia. The tension between religious law and civil rights, between community norms and individual autonomy, reflects fundamental questions about the role of religion in democratic, pluralistic societies that remain unresolved in Indonesian law and society.

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