

## The Relationship Pattern of Husband and Wife *Mualafs* in Formation of A Harmonious Family

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### Abstract

Every spouse expects the established marriage is always to be peaceful, harmonious and till the end of life. In maintaining marital harmony, mualaf often face various challenges in carrying out their role as husband or wife, especially when choosing their spouses from different ethnicities. This study aims to look at the patterns that occur in the relationship of married spouses in the community of mualaf in Malaysia to preserve their marital harmony. This descriptive study used a qualitative method by conducting interviews with 25 mualafs from five (5) zones, namely the West Coast Zone Peninsular, South, North, East Coast and East Malaysia. To strengthen the findings of the study, interviews with 5 figures who are directly involved with the affairs of mualaf in these zones were also conducted. The results of the study found that the pattern of relationship between mualaf spouses shows a relationship that has various levels of situations, namely the relationship is accommodation, mutual support, neutral, indifferent and conflict. The information from this study is to some extent able to reveal the situation and challenges faced by the community of mualaf in Malaysia to the relevant parties to be sensitive to the problems faced by this community.

**Keywords:** Relationships, Spouse, Husbands and Wives, Mualaf, Marital Harmony

### Introduction

Every spouse dreams that the home they built will last until the end of life. The compatibility of the spouse from the aspect of social class, race similarity, education level and personality similarity is one of the factors that can maintain the harmony of the household. However, aspects related to the negative environment, personality and bad attitude cause married spouses to face various challenges in maintaining their marriage. This misunderstanding further causes cases of wife abuse, neglect of maintenance, spouses not fulfilling religious demands, engaging in gambling, alcohol and drug abuse; etc. This also happens in the life of husband and wife who choose their life partner from groups with different languages and

cultures. Therefore, this paper discusses the relationship pattern of Muslim converted husband and wife in Malaysia in navigating the household to continue to be harmonious and lasting until the end of life.

Cultural differences are often a factor that causes conflict in the *mualaf* households. This initial information is important to the responsible parties such as government departments, Muslim convert NGO bodies in Malaysia that manage *mualafs* so that appropriate action can be taken to ensure the harmony of the household that is built lasts until the end of life.

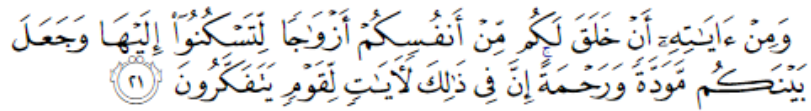
### **Problem Statement**

A report from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (2017) states that between 2012-2015, which is four years, the number of married spouses (639,652), divorced (129,410) and referral cases were (16,947). The figure shows that the phenomenon of divorce among Muslim families in Malaysia is always happening. These divorce cases also involve the community of *mualaf* who married native Muslims (Harian, 2021). *Mualafs* who embrace Islam because of marriage and material factors tend to return to the old faiths when there is a conflict in the family (Majid and Muhammad, 2018). Related to this, Muhammad et al (2018) stated that the Syariah Court has received as many as 863 cases of applications to change the status of Islam among Muslim converts in Malaysia from 2000 to 2010. Among the factors that caused this group to leave Islam is that the native Muslim spouse who married failed to guide Islam because they were ignorant of the religion. Thus, disharmony in the household can lead *mualafs* to return to the old faiths.

### **Literature Review**

Marriage is a strong bond up to the level of sexual intercourse that legitimizes the relationship between a man (husband) and a woman (wife). Then from this bond arise obligations and rights that need to be implemented and obeyed by the spouse who are husband and wife through the division of duties as stated by religious law. The husband's role as the head of the household is responsible for providing for the wife and children while the wife's role is to help the husband as the head of the family (Hermanto, 2019). Concerning this, Musthapar and Ahmad (2022) stated that the relationship between husband and wife must be based on *mu'āsharah bil ma'rūf*, which is a good association of obligation ordered by *syarak*. Socializing and relationships based on *mu'āsharah bil ma'rūf* in the family will certainly produce harmony and tranquillity in the built household.

The family is the smallest unit in society that has an important role in developing the nation and the country. A harmonious family is a household that is decorated with a sense of calmness, and tranquillity, fertile with love, producing offspring, sacrifices, helping each other and working together, perfecting each other, and complementing each other. In the formation of this family, there are quite important social positions, namely husband (father), wife (mother) and children. In a family, the relationship between husband and wife is mutually dependent, while children are very dependent on their parents in terms of meeting their needs (Clara and Wardani, 2020). Thus, to achieve this goal, a harmonious family requires the demands of biological development, education, stimulating religious integrity, providing protection, preparing its members to cope with the norms of life, developing the economy and so on (Sainul, 2018). In Islam, harmony in the household is closely related to the concepts of *sakīnah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah*. The word of God in Surah Al-Rum verse 21 which means:



Translation: "And among the signs of His power is that He creates for you wives of your own kind so that you may be inclined and feel at ease with them and He may make love and affection between you. Verily, in that there are indeed signs for people who think."

Musthafar et al (2020) stated that humans will obtain mental and physical peace, namely *sakīnah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah* which can only be realized when men and women enter the realm of marriage. In interpreting the words '*litaskunuu ilaiha*', al-Rāzi (n.d) explained that physical tranquillity is the beginning of married life while mental tranquillity becomes the main objective when the spouse enters the realm of marriage. Further, the spouse will receive *mawaddah* when they have sex and feel mercy when they are blessed with offspring. Quṭb (n.d) in his interpretation of *Fi Zilalli al-Quran* states that the relationship between husband and wife can create the needs of human nature that include aspects of physicality, *akliyyah* and *nafsiyyah* that promote calmness, self-relaxation and emotional stability. Thus, al-Ṭabari (1999) stated that only through the marriage bond, married spouses experience *mawaddah* when love and relationships are established between them.

In Malaysia, the ethnic Chinese mostly follow Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, the Indian ethnic group adheres to Hinduism, while the Bumiputeras of Sabah and Sarawak adhere to Christianity as the largest non-Muslim group. Thus, the term *mualaf* refers to 'a group that has just converted to Islam' which consists of groups that originally were local non-Muslims such as Chinese, Indians, Sabahans and Sarawak bumiputeras. Even so, there are non-citizens who embrace Islam in Malaysia consisting of foreign workers and tourists (Ghazali, 2020). The affairs of *mualafs* that related the procedure of embracing Islam, their welfare and education are placed respectively under the state government (Azman et al., 2015a). However, in applying this definition of *mualaf*, Azman et al (2015b) found that there is no coordination between state governments in Malaysia regarding the length of time a person can be called the term. In other words, some states set a time limit and some states do not set any time limit until when a person is called a *mualaf*. Taking into account that the new brothers are a group that has just become familiar with the teachings of Islam, the naming of the term *mualaf* is actually an appreciation of Islam towards this group so that they are always given special attention. This is explained in the word of Allah in surah al-Tawbah verse 60 which means:

Translation: "Indeed, Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveller - an obligation [imposed] by Allah."

Kawi and Abdullah (2020) stated that the marriage factor is one of the reasons why *mualafs* embrace Islam. Other factors include social factors, the encouragement of families who have embraced Islam and divine guidance. However, Ghazali (2020) explained that there

are several different situations of *mualaf* marriage in Malaysia. Among them, *mualafs* want to marry a local Malay Muslim native, want to marry a Muslim spouse from a different ethnic group after both have embraced Islam and *mualafs* keep their native partner because both have embraced the religion. Therefore, this study focuses on the experiences experienced by *mualaf* spouses in Malaysia, i.e. the husband is a *mualaf* and the wife is a native Muslim or the husband is a native Muslim while the wife is a *mualaf*.

### **Research Methodology**

The data in this study was obtained through document research and field studies. Document research is exploration specifically on secondary sources such as books, journals, theses, dissertations and related articles. Research on the document was done before the actual field study was conducted to obtain information and understand the corpus of knowledge that was carried out in the study. In this way, the researcher can know the areas that have been studied, as well as the areas that were less focused by the previous researchers. The author found that previous studies have not focused on the subject of religious appreciation among *mualafs*. Therefore, the researcher believes that the study of previous studies is very important so that subsequent researchers can identify the gaps in previous studies, which can be overcome by the latest research, as well as being able to add a new corpus of knowledge related to the field being studied.

Usman and Akba (2022) stated that qualitative research design can be used to explain the current status of a phenomenon. Related to this, an interview approach was conducted to see the phenomenon of human understanding in behaving. This subjective approach emphasizes the role of human beings as humanists who have will, feelings and build meaning to create civilization as a result of their interpretation according to the atmosphere of time and place. Through the interview method the researcher obtains more detailed and focused data. Therefore, a descriptive study that uses this kind of design can provide an overview, information, explanation, perception and deep understanding to answer the research questions that have been formed.

Therefore, this field study using qualitative methods was conducted in five (5) zone centers, namely at Darul Hidayah New Brothers (Mualaf) Training Center, Kuala Terengganu (Eastern Zone), New Brothers (Mualaf) Training Center in PERKIM Johor Bharu (Southern Zone), New Brothers (Mualaf) Training Center at MACMA Selangor (West Zone) and the New Brothers (Mualaf) Training Center at PERKIM Perak (Northern Zone) and the New Brothers (Mualaf) Training Center in Sabah. Interviews on 25 *mualafs* were conducted at the specified guidance centers. Thus, the researcher obtained information in general about matters that related with the factors of embracing Islam, the role of the spouse in stimulating the harmony of the *mualaf's* household. Through interviews, research participants can explain information based on their own views. In order to get more clear and detailed information, the researcher further conducted semi-structured interviews on 5 figures who were directly involved in the management of *mualafs* in that place.

All the questions were formulated and constructed based on themes and theories identified by the researcher and reviewed by experts in relevant fields. The data collection process was done through a semi-structured and focused interview method so that there is a sharing of experience between the researcher and the respondent (Long, 2009). However, the data collection is stopped when the data obtained has reached saturation (Creswell,

2005). The interview guide can be used as a checklist so that no information is missed. Prior to that, a pilot interview study was conducted to help the researcher prepare the plan to collect data such as modifying the items according to the comments given by the respondents, determining the type required and the process to be followed when collecting data. In addition, through pilot studies, researchers can check the validity of the instruments used and find out the constraints that exist when the data collection process was carried out. The answers recorded on tape were transferred in the form of transcripts. To facilitate the research, the researcher divided the answers based on the desired categories in this study.

### Findings

The findings explain the background of the respondents, mutually supportive relationships, accommodating relationships, neutral relationships, do not care about relationships and conflictual relationships. The respondents consisted of 25 *mualafs* from five (5) selected zones, namely Terengganu (East Coast Zone of the Peninsula), Johor (Southern Zone of the Peninsula), Selangor (Kelang Valley Zone), Perak (North Zone) and Sabah (East Malaysia Zone). Thus, this study was carried out to describe the real situation in the *mualaf* community in Malaysia. At the same time, the research participants involved had reflected their religious life experience in the selected zone. This is due to the factors and background of the surrounding community that will represent the views of the *mualaf* community from all angles.

Table 1

*Background of Respondents*

Respondent Code	Location	Gender	Race	Marital Status
Resp#1	Terengganu	Female	Chinese	Married
Resp#2	Terengganu	Female	Philippines	Married
Resp#3	Terengganu	Male	Chinese	Married
Resp#4	Terengganu	Female	Ibanese	Married
Resp#5	Terengganu	Male	Chinese	Married
Resp#6	Johor	Male	Chinese	Widower
Resp#7	Johor	Male	Chinese	Married
Resp#8	Johor	Female	Indian	Married
Resp#9	Johor	Female	Indian	Married
Resp#10	Johor	Female	Philippines	Married
Resp#11	Selangor	Female	Chinese	Married
Resp#12	Selangor	Male	Mix Indian & Chinese	Bujang
Resp#13	Selangor	Female	Dusun	Married
Resp#14	Selangor	Female	Chinese	Married
Resp#15	Selangor	Male	Chinese	Married
Resp#16	Perak	Male	Indian	Widower
Resp#17	Perak	Male	Indian	Widower
Resp#18	Perak	Male	Chinese	Married
Resp#19	Perak	Female	Indian	Widow
Resp#20	Perak	Male	Chinese	Widower

Resp#21	Sabah	Female	Murut	Married
Resp#22	Sabah	Female	Rungus	Married
Resp#23	Sabah	Female	Murut	Married
Resp#24	Sabah	Female	Dusun	Married
Resp#25	Sabah	Female	Kadazanese	Widow

(Source: Interview Study)

Based on Table 1 above, the majority of respondents are from the Chinese community, which is a total of 10 people, followed by five (5) Indians, six (6) Sabahans, one (1) Iban, one (1) mixed and two (2) non-citizens persons. Based on the findings of the study, most of the respondents were married and chose a partner from the Malay race as a life spouse. Respondents who did not have a partner due to separation because of religious differences, still young and children. Some *mualafs* have been divorced because they converted to Islam and are planning to remarry by choosing a partner from an Indonesian citizen working in Malaysia. After all, association with Muslims, especially at work, is an incentive for non-Muslims to embrace the religion and then marry into the original Muslim community.

Based on the research conducted through the interviews conducted, it can be stated that in building harmony in the *mualaf's* household, the starting point is from:

#### i. Supportive Relationships

The relationship between a husband and wife who support each other is described as an interaction that takes place in this form of low conflict (low conflict) and high discussion (high consensus) (Sabastian and Parameswaran, 2007). In other words, look at the shortcomings of each convert spouse by trying to channel as much as possible. In developing harmony in the family, a mutually supportive relationship is the most common relationship found in the household life of *mualafs* in Malaysia. This can be seen in the aspect of the scholarly development of the *mualaf* spouse.

"My husband teaches the basics of religious education, the rest I learn by myself"  
(Resp#24Sabah)

"He (husband) taught me about Islam, how to be patient, what Islam is, what is allowed in Islam and what is not allowed. I also learned a lot from his sister (female religious teacher) about Islam until I wear *hijab* today". (Resp#22 Sabah)

"My husband is not very good at teaching but my father-in-law taught me a lot about Islam". (Resp#23Sabah)

"My original family has no problem, they already know me.. they are amazed.. I really am, she (wife) said you really follow me. You really follow it.. sometimes my sister says that people born in Islam are not serious like you".. (Resp#13Selangor)

This is also explained in the aspect of celebrating their native cultures. This is stated as follows:

"it's just like the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims when they arrive (non-Muslim families) they already know that we are family, because when there

is Hari Raya (Muslim festival), Chinese Raya and so on they know that we can welcome everyone".. (Resp# 12Selangor)

This mutually supportive relationship can nourish the values of tolerance in conjugal relations, especially when it involves family members of the Muslim converted spouse. Resp#1Terengganu for example stated that when she celebrated Chinese New Year at her mother's house, her husband slaughtered a chicken and prepared halal food so that they could celebrate together with their non-Muslim family. This is stated as follows:

"when we celebrate Chinese New Year at my mother's house, my husband slaughters a chicken...we prepare it together". (Resp#1 Terengganu)

## ii. Accommodating Relationships

Accommodation is a process of social adjustment to ease conflict. In this accommodative relationship, each group with different cultures accommodates to eliminate the gap or distance that is the cause of conflict. Five things affect the stages and ways of self-adjustment in accommodation, among them are physical condition, personality, learning process, environment, religion and culture (Nurdiana et al., 2020). The accommodation nature relationship that has been happening for a long time with the Muslim community causes non-Muslims to choose to embrace Islam. In other words, early association across religions becomes a catalyst for *mualafs* to know Islam indirectly and then embrace the religion. Since marriage is a biological necessity of every human being, there are cases among *mualafs* who embrace Islam because they want to start a family with another Muslim native. This is stated as follows:

"I embraced Islam in 2009 because I wanted to marry my husband".  
(Resp#22Sabah)

"I converted to Islam because I wanted to get married, my mother was shocked and didn't let me, so I left the house". (Resp#5Terengganu)

Since the accommodative relationship that was established before Islam. Therefore, preserving this form of relationship after the occurrence of this cross-cultural marriage, can be observed in the aspect of daily language use at home. Apparently, the Malay language is the main choice in daily communication among *mualafs* who marry non-Malay Muslims. Resp#22Sabah for example from the Rungus tribe who converted to Islam in 2009 and married a Muslim spouse natively from the Bajau tribe for example explained that in daily communication with her husband and children, they use Malay at home even though each of them has own mother tongue. This was also stated by Resp#24Sabah from the Dusun Kijau tribe who is married to her husband from the Brunei Malay Muslim ethnicity that the Malay language is used as the main medium in family communication. Nevertheless, the respondent also taught his children to communicate using the Dusun language so that this heritage would not be lost just like that. For *mualafs* who are less proficient in using the Malay language, especially foreigners who marry ethnic Malays, English is used as a medium of daily communication at home (Resp#5Johor). But for resp#2Terengganu, in addition to using English, the respondent also tries to speak using Malay since her husband is Malay and lives in that community. This is stated as follows

"Besides using English I also speak Malay (Terengganu dialect) at home".  
(Resp#2Terengganu)

The accommodating relationship of husband and wife for this *mualaf* spouse cannot only be observed in the aspect of daily communication but also in the aspect of providing food. (Resp#22Sabah) for example, explains as follows:

"In our community (Rungus), we usually prepare stewed food but my husband likes to eat spicy fried food. I study with mama (mother) or tell mama to cook vegetables or with side dishes to be fried". (Resp#22Sabah)

In another case, this Chinese respondent explained as follows

"When my wife gives birth, my mother (non-Muslim) comes to the house to cook soup and steam for my wife to eat". (Resp#1Terengganu)

From the aspect of cultural entertainment, it is stated as follows

"When my husband's family holds a wedding party together, I help him like a Malay...cut vegetables, onions...I don't feel awkward". (Resp#5Terengganu)

"We celebrate Hari Raya and Raya Chinese and there are all kinds of husband's friends who know that we welcome them all.. we celebrate, right.. it's good company.. Okay.. We're close." (Resp#11Selangor)

### iii. Neutral Relationship

A neutral relationship can be explained as a husband and wife relationship that only receives a little pressure (Awang and Hambali, 2014). In the life of a *mualaf* spouse, high tolerance towards shared values causes family harmony to be maintained. These common values are used as a shared practice. Related to this, the statements of the respondents below show that the relationship between husband and wife only has a little conflict. This is stated as follows:

"My husband is an ethnic Bruneian Malay, when celebrating Hari Raya,..he likes to eat modern tastes, ..so I have no problem preparing meals, besides, I am used to celebrating Hari Raya". (Resp#24Sabah)

Further, in terms of nutrition, it is explained as follows

"I don't face problems when my wife prepares food such as singgang fish, *budu* or *sambal belacan* (Malay traditional food). I have lived with the Malay way of life for a long time". (Resp#5Terengganu)

"In terms of food, we used to be Malay, so food is not a problem.. my family doesn't really eat meat.. I'm not a vegetarian because we eat chicken.."  
(Resp#9Johor)

For *mualafs* who marry into the Malay community, the use of the local dialect Malay in family communication is not a big challenge because since childhood the respondent was exposed to the social life of the community. This matter is stated as follows:



"I mix a lot with the local Malay people.. I speak Malay fluently.. so that's why I got married based on true love".. (Resp#19Perak)

In short, this neutral relationship is influenced by being accustomed to cultural customs or knowing a little about the background of Islam through the experience of social relationships that occurred before Islam with the Muslim community. This is further stated in the following statement:

"When I was a child, my friends were all Malays, from childhood I lived near the village, I went anywhere only Malays.. their influence was strong". (Resp#17Perak)

#### iv. Don't Care Relationship

The fact is, in navigating life in a household, the role of a Muslim spouse is very important to provide guidance, role models and explain the shortcomings of religion that can be improved and overcome so that the level of understanding of the *mualaf* group can be improved until they become Muslims who truly appreciate Islam. The results of the study show that there is a phenomenon of spouses who take an attitude that does not care about the established household. Many of these cases are found among husbands (Muslim natives) who leave their converted spouses alone from the aspect of religious education because he himself does not know and practice the teachings of Islam. This is stated by Resp#22 Sabah as follows:

"My husband rarely prays, and buys numbers, I learn Islam from my son who is in secondary school". (Resp#22Sabah)

"I converted to Islam a long time ago...my husband did not teach me about Islam, I am not good at studying". (Resp#1Terengganu)

Related to this, Norhana (2020) states that this attitude of indifference becomes worse when the husband does not allow his wife (Muslim convert) to study Islamic education in classes organized by religious officials. In addition to not caring about religious education, some *mualaf* families neglect to provide for their wives and children. This situation eventually causes a carefree relationship to turn into a domestic conflict. This is stated as follows:

"I work to support the children, my husband left me". (Resp#19Perak)

#### v. Conflictual Relationships

The relationship of conflict that occurs in a *mualaf* spouse is caused by various factors. Among them, the spouse (husband) neglects to support his converted wife and children. This experience was explained by resp#2Terengganu as follows:

"My first marriage, my husband didn't fulfil his responsibilities, didn't give alimony...in the end, we divorced" (Resp#2Terengganu)

In addition, there are cases of intervention from the family of the original Muslim spouse who are quite difficult to accept the shortcomings or cultural differences of the *mualafs*. This is explained as follows

"My mother-in-law looked askance, she didn't want to eat my food, she said it was dirty. When I first got married, I wore a skirt in the house..he told me to wear like a Malay (baju kurung) I can't feel hot".. (Resp#5Terengganu)

Further stated Resp4#Terengganu states as follows

"Please bring my wife back to meet my mother, my mother served me some cake, she doesn't want to eat".

In other cases, relationships are also caused by siblings

"It's just that the brothers on my husband's side are not very satisfied with me.. I feel that maybe people think that I am a Hindu when I convert to Islam. People see me as different... but I promised my husband that even if I just converted to Islam, I can show them the right way. that's right". (Resp #9 Johor).

There are also cases of spouses who leave their converted spouses because they see their spouse still practising the old way of life.

"I was once married, now I am taking care of the children..when I converted to Islam I still socialized freely..in the end, my wife asked for a divorce". (Resp#17Silver)

## Discussion

Ultimately, in achieving household harmony the support from each spouse is very important in bearing the responsibilities and roles given. The findings show that in this mutually supportive relationship, *mualaf* spouses empathize with each other and are more open to understanding the cultural differences that exist. Although this practice is rarely or never done before they get married, it has been found that this mutually supportive relationship pattern can reduce conflict and produce lasting harmony. The findings of this study coincide with the study conducted by Jaapar and Azahari (2011) who explained that a harmonious family is a family who can feel good about each other and their own life and have clear and positive objectives in developing the family.

The form of accommodative relationship in the *mualaf* family is a form of relationship based on celebrating differences by respecting the differences that exist in the spouse. But at the same time, spouses of different ethnicities try to maintain existing customs and traditions. Usually, *mualaf* spouses have been through this accommodative relationship since before they got married again, where the interweaving of the activities happened because of social factors and living in the same area. The clash of two different traditions is seen as not a big obstacle in developing household harmony. However, in establishing this accommodative relationship, the custom done in the original culture taking into account these aspects is not contrary to the wishes of *syar'a* law. Concerning this, Paiz and Anuar (2020) stated that the aspect of *uruf* is seen as an important element in determining a law because it has its local value to highlight the principle of *murunah* (flexibility).

A neutral relationship pattern depends on 'equality' in terms of opinion, social, values, beliefs and lifestyle. However, early exposure to other people's values, namely social norms that involves certain behaviours and etiquette, fosters social cohesion in the community. In other words, this culturally different *mualaf* spouse is more open to celebrating the differences that occur in the routine of household life. This is in line with the statement of

Shamsul (2011) who explained that social cohesion is a peaceful, prosperous and stable situation that can exist in a society with different ethnicities due to the existence of a strong social bond (social bonding) that has been built for a long time based on the exchange of positive relationships, active interactive and the existence of positive efforts towards the involvement of all parties.

This carefree relationship involves both parties, the Muslim native spouse and the *mualaf* himself. One of the factors that encourage converts to embrace Islam is wanting to marry a Muslim native partner without examining their religious background and economic strength. Because the Muslim native spouse was also shallow in religious knowledge and the *mualaf's* interest in learning about religion was less encouraging, each took an indifferent attitude towards what happened in family life. This is also stated by Azizah (2018) that even though *mualafs* have embraced Islam for a long time, there are among them who are not good at reading the Quran and do not have the equipment to perform prayers. In fact, this Muslim native spouse does not have the initiative to bring the converted spouse to a place of religious study. Although he has embraced Islam for a long time, his understanding of religion is static, whereas the *mualaf* is likened to a "baby", who should be cared for, developed knowledge and all his spiritual needs should be taken care of.

This conflictual relationship is the starting point of a relationship that doesn't care. A conflicted relationship shows the internal problems that occur in the *mualaf* spouse's household are caused by various factors. Among the factors that lead to conflict are neglect of responsibility, financial and emotional problems, interference of parents-in-law and mother-in-law; still be prejudiced against the spouse's family and so on. Sometimes, the goal of finding harmony in this household cannot be achieved when these cross-cultural marriages end in divorce. The findings of this study are in line with the study conducted by Zin and Abdullah (2018) which states that the conflict that occurs in the households of converted spouses is caused by financial factors, violence, shallow religious knowledge and the conflict between customs and culture.

### **Conclusion**

*Mualafs* go through a period of readjusting to a new life as required by Islamic law. Considering that *mualafs* have different old religious backgrounds, cultures, and current relationships with the local Muslim community, this certainly affects to some extent the social relationships with their life partners who have different languages and cultures. Thus, in achieving household harmony, the results of the study show that the relationship in the family of a *mualaf* spouse in Malaysia is colored in a variety of relationships, namely, an accommodating relationship, a mutually supportive relationship, a neutral relationship, an indifferent relationship and a conflictual relationship. Even so, a relationship that supports each other is the most common form of relationship that underpins the life of a *mualaf*. This study is important because it reveals the real stories that *mualaf* go through in their family life to related bodies and to subsequent researchers.

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