
Interfaith Marriage: Perception of College Students of Basilan State College

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Abstract – Interfaith Marriage, traditionally called “mixed marriage”, is a marriage between partners with different religion. Even they have different beliefs they tend to marry each other. This unique kind of marriage commonly face problem before and after the marriage. The study determines the perception of our college students on interfaith marriage. The descriptive research design was used in the study. A survey questionnaire was used to gather the needed data. The data gathered were statistically treated, analyzed and interpreted. Frequency and Percentage was used to describe the data and T-test was used in comparing and determining the significant differences of the scores mean. The students are perceptive of interfaith marriage and there is a significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert religion among male and female. It is concluded that the perception of interfaith marriage in our college is accepted by our college students. Our college students approve the conversion of faith when marrying somebody of different religious faith.

Keywords – Sociology, Interfaith Marriage, Marriage Conversion, Descriptive-Survey, Basilan Province, Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriages between individuals of different faiths (“interfaith marriages”) are becoming increasingly common in American society^{[1]-[2]-[3]-[4]}. This phenomenon is in congruence with the secularized view of religion, which suggests that people are not considering religious identification to be an important criterion in mate selection^[5].

Interreligious unions are on the rise in Canada. Data from the 2001 census show that an estimated 19% of all married or common-law couples consist of partners from two different religious backgrounds, with Muslims and Hindus being the least likely to marry outside of their religion. Among Muslims, a preference for intra-marriage may be due in part to the relatively recent history of migration to Canada, and that these new Canadian Muslims are holding on to their heritage culture, including traditional norms and values regarding marriage. Further, data from the two most recent censuses show that in 2001 about 9% of Muslims were in interreligious unions, compared to 13% in 1981. This drop could be at least partly explained by an increased availability of Muslim partners as a result of continuing immigration^[6].

Further, there is research that suggests that as members of different religious groups become less devoted to their religion, the social boundaries between them decline in strength^[7]. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect more positive attitudes and greater openness toward interfaith dating and marriage among those low in religious identification. Interestingly he has noted that while intermarriages between individuals from different educational backgrounds are declining, interfaith couples tend to have increasingly similar levels of education. This, he argues, might suggest that education is gaining in importance over religion as a determining factor when selecting a partner.

There are several factors that may either facilitate or hinder the likelihood of an individual engaging in cross-cultural and interfaith relationships. Previous research suggests that the degree of religious affiliation impacts

upon the likelihood of interfaith and cross cultural marriages: the more affiliated to religion an individual is the less likely that an individual will be to engage in interfaith and cross cultural dating or marriages^[8].

Recent surveys^{[9]-[10]} reveal that people are increasingly independent in their spiritual lives, picking and choosing among aspects of their faith to fit their lives and relationships, a trend called “religion à la carte” by Canadian sociologist Bibby (2002)^[11]. Many blend varied approaches, such as Eastern Buddhist and Hindu practices, with their Christian or Jewish faith. Others convert to other religions or nondenominational churches, searching new spiritual pathways. While 16% of adults are unaffiliated with any religion, most who are unaffiliated regard personal faith or a broader spirituality as important in their lives. Interfaith marriage and multifamily families are on the rise. Although survey data tend to be individually focused, these trends bring complexity to family dynamics. As individuals and couples attempt to shape their own meaningful spiritual paths, relational and intergenerational differences can fuel tensions, conflict, and estrangement^[12].

Intermarriage rates usually fail to consider conversion of one spouse to the other spouse's religion. Based on the literature, actual conversion rates are unclear. Yinger (1970)^[13] reported that almost half of all interfaith marriages in the United States led to conversion. On the other hand, some researchers have found that few such interfaith marriages result in conversion^{[14]-[15]-[16]}. For example, in Rimor's (1989)^[17] study of interfaith marriages, it was reported that only 15% of these marriages resulted in the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse to Judaism. Most recently, Clamar (1991)^[18] stated that one out of three interfaith marriages leads to formal conversion of one spouse to the other spouse's religion. In these reports, it is not clear if pre-marital conversions were considered. If not, then the proportion of conversions may be significantly underestimated.

Interracial marriage among whites show that gender does not affect attitudes towards interracial marriage^{[19]-[20]-[21]} while other studies show that men are more willing to interracially date than women^{[22]-[23]-[24]-[25]}. Moreover Mills and Daly's study shows that female respondent's reports more negative prejudicial attitudes towards interracial relationships than male respondents^[26]. Hirschl and others' study showed that marriage enhances the odds of affluence significantly for female and not as significantly for male; therefore the decision to marry becomes more important to female than male^[27]. In a study which examines gender differences in desired characteristics when searching for a partner for both short term and long term relationship, the result showed that men focus more on physical attractiveness in general, while women focus more on earning capacity^[28].

In the Philippines, cases of marriages among Filipino Muslims and Christians indicate that marital alliance and union among individuals belonging to groups separated for centuries by prejudice, suspicion, cultural contrasts, and sharply distinctive social characteristics is already a social reality. Despite the tensions and prejudices which have dominated the social relations between Filipino Muslims and Christians to this day^{[29]-[30]}, a significant number of individuals have crossed the ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural barriers to matrimony.

Moreover, in a culture like ours where education is an almost certain key to upward social mobility, it is expected that the educated ones will desire marriage with partners who are also educated^[31]. Among Muslims, whether male or female, the higher their education, the more open they will become towards intermarriage with Christians. Education will probably play a more critical role when the union involves a female Muslim and a male Christian.

Based from these literatures and observations, the researcher would like to find out the perception of Fourth Year Students of Basilan State College on Interfaith Marriage. Mainly, the researcher would like to determine the conversion of religion when adapting interfaith marriage and if interfaith marriage is accepted in the family.

Theoretical Framework

Intermarriage Theory

Intermarriage theories embrace micro, mezzo, and macro levels of explanation [32]. Homogamous theory is the main idea over the theories that asserts “like attracts like” (Hollingshead 1950, p. 619) [33]. On the micro level, theorists argue that educational background, occupation, race and ethnicity have built up “social characteristics” (Kalmijn 1998) [34]. Behind social characteristics are “socioeconomic resources” for individuals to gain, i.e. “...The most attractive candidates [who have access to more socioeconomic resources] select among themselves while the least attractive candidates [who lack socioeconomic resources] have to rely on one economic positions are more likely to meet, but eventually “cultural similarities” put people together. Cultural similarities refer to the resemblances between two personalities in terms of values, opinions, tastes and knowledge. These resemblances bring people similar expectations of marital life and make them suitable for one another. The micro level of intermarriage theories emphasizes that individuals’ preferences influence spouse choice directly. The marital partner comes out through the selecting of social characteristics and cultural similarities.

Religion is the social tie or third party that has been discussed within the mezzo level of intermarriage theories (Kalmijn 1991, 1998; Sherkat 2004). It is claimed that churches compete for one another and attempt to restrain their members from interfaith marriage since interfaith marriage may risk the conversion of faith or the switching of denomination. Church members’ parents and friends may compose strong opinions against interfaith marriage and thus create group sanctions. Sherkat (2004) pointed out that the group sanctions could be quiet powerful when a person’s family and friends all share the same faith.

Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualized “The Perception of Basilan State College Students on Interfaith Marriage”. The respondents of the study are the fourth year Teacher Education and BS Criminology students of Basilan State College.

The Independent variable of the study is the fourth year Teacher Education and Criminology students.

The dependent variables are a) *marrying someone with different religion and requiring the partner to convert in his/her religion* and b) *if interfaith marriage is accepted in his/her family*.

The implication of the study is “diminishing social distance between various ethnic groups in the province.

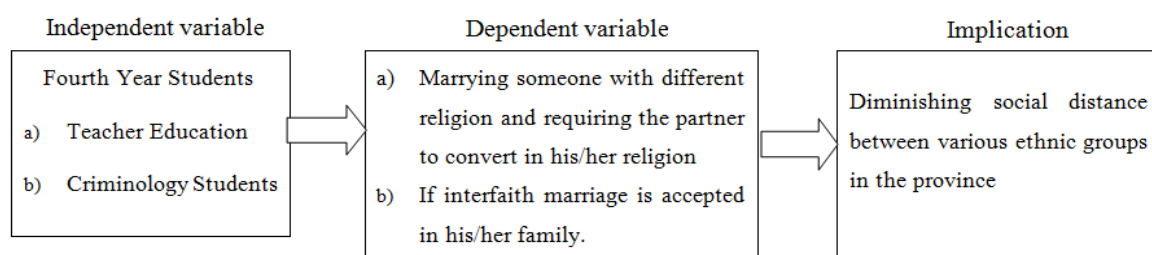


Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the conceptual framework of the study.

Statement of the Problem

This study will determine the perception of interfaith marriage among the Teacher Education and Criminology students of Basilan State College. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of;
 - a) Gender,
 - b) Religion,
 - c) And academic course?
2. Are you aware about interfaith marriage?
3. What is the level of perception of the student of Basilan State College (BSC) in terms of;
 - a) Marrying someone with different religion and requiring the partner to convert in his/her religion,
 - b) And if interfaith marriage is accepted in his/her family?
4. Is there a significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in his/her religion among male and female?

Statement of Hypotheses

1. Interfaith marriage is not accepted among the Teacher Education and Criminology students of Basilan State College.
2. There is no significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in his/her religion between male and female.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

This chapter outlines the manner in which the study will be conducted. The key components are the research method, the respondent and sample, research instrument, data gathering procedure and statistical treatment of the data.

The Research Method

The approach used in this study is descriptive-survey research method. The descriptive-survey method of research, according to Travers (1978) aims to answer questions regarding the status or nature of the situation as it exists at the time of the study, which also involves testing certain hypotheses and exploring the causes of the particular phenomena. Since this study needs to determine the perception of Interfaith Marriage among the Teacher Education and Criminology students of Basilan State College, this method is used.

The Respondent and Sample

The respondents of the study are the students of Basilan State College. The respondents are the Teacher Education and BS Criminology students. The respondents are mixture of different religious sect and compose of male and female. The sampling method use in the study is convenient sampling since we need to take the opinion of the sample with different religious beliefs. A total of 50 respondents were chosen for this study.

Shown below is the number of samples for each group of the same religious sect.

Table 1. The Distribution of Religious Sect (N = 50).

| Religious Sect | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Total |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Roman Catholic | 16 | 32.0% | 16 |
| Islam | 20 | 40.0% | 20 |
| Iglesiani Christo | 5 | 10.0% | 10 |
| Protestant | 5 | 10.0% | 10 |
| Born Again | 4 | 8.0% | 4 |
| Total | 50 | 100% | 50 |

Table I shows the distribution of the samples using the convenient sampling method. The total sample is 50 respondents. The Roman Catholic is 16 that is 32.0%, the Islam is 20 that is 40.0%, the Iglesia ni Christo is 5 that is 10.0%, the Protestant is 5 that is 10.0%, and the Born Again is 4 that is 8.0%. As can be gleaned from the table above, the Islam is the biggest respondent followed by Roman Catholic and the least is Born Again.

The Research Instrument

A survey will be conducted to measure the respondents' perception on Interfaith Marriage. The general purpose of the survey is to collect data from the respondents about their knowledge and opinion on Interfaith Marriage (Gall et al., 1996). A questionnaire will be formulated as a survey instrument to obtain the current knowledge and opinion of fourth year Teacher Education students and BS Criminology students of Basilan State College on Interfaith Marriage.

The questionnaire is of two parts; Part A is the Personal Profile of the respondents and Part B is the perception of fourth year Teacher Education and BS Criminology students on Interfaith Marriage. Each item in Part B is answered in "yes" or "no".

The Instrument Reliability

The Alpha (Cronbach), a model of internal consistency reliability, which is based on the average inter-item correlation, is the model adopted in this study.

Internal consistency reliability vary from a low of 0 to a high of 1.0 and represent the proportion of the variance in the respondents' scores that are attributable to the true differences on the psychological construct (DeVellis, 1991). The following guidelines have been proposed by DeVellis (1991) regarding acceptable reliabilities for research instrument scales:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Below .60 | Unacceptable |
| Between .60 and .65 | Undesirable |
| Between .65 and .70 | Minimally acceptable |
| Between .70 and .80 | Respectable |
| Between .80 and .90 | Very Good |
| Much above .90 | Very Good, considering shortening the scale |

An instrument with a Cronbach Alpha value of below 0.60 would mean that its reliability is unacceptable. An Alpha value of between 0.60 and 0.65 would signify that its reliability is undesirable. An Alpha value 0.65 to 0.70 would be interpreted as minimally acceptable. A value of between 0.70 and 0.80 implies that the instrument's reliability is respectable. An Alpha value of 0.80 and 0.90 indicates that the reliability is very good. An instrument is considered having a good reliability, and with the possibility of shortening its scale, is that with a Cronbach Alpha of much above 0.90.

A pre-testing of the questionnaire will be conducted on 30 fourth year Teacher Education and Criminology student of different religious sect who are not part of the study. An instrument reliability analysis will then be conducted based on the data that will be obtained. The result of such test was that the Cronbach Alpha value was 0.85, which means that the reliability of the instrument was very good.

The Instrument Validity

The Alpha (Cronbach), a model of internal consistency reliability, which is based on the average inter-item correlation, will be used to determine the validity of the instrument. Using the path finder analysis of Cronbach Alpha model, the Cronbach Alpha of each item in a questionnaire must not have a Cronbach Alpha value of less than 0.7.

A pre-testing of the questionnaire will be conducted to 30 fourth year Teacher Education and Criminology students of different religious sect who are not part of the study using this analysis. Since each item in the questionnaire does not have a Cronbach Alpha value of less than 0.7, the instrument of this study was very valid.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission will be asked from the college president to conduct the survey of this study on the fourth year Teacher Education and BS Criminology students. Upon approval by the President, the researcher will start mining data to answer the researcher questions. Then collate the data and start the statistical treatment of the data.

Statistical Treatment of Data

In this section, the descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to describe the data.

To determine the respondents' profile, the frequency and percentage will be used.

To determine the level of perception on interfaith marriage, the frequency and percentage will be used.

To determine the significant difference on gender, the t-test will be used.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered based on the research problems. The presentation of data is in the order arranged according to the statements of problems in an attempt to answer them congruently.

The first research question that this study sought to answer was, "What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of;

- a) Gender,
- b) Religion, and
- c) Academic course?"

Table 2. The Distribution of the Respondents According to their Profile (N = 50).

| Profile | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 22 | 44.0% |
| Female | 28 | 56.0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| Religion | | |
| Roman Catholic | 16 | 32.0% |
| Islam | 20 | 40.0% |
| Iglesiani Christo | 5 | 10.0% |
| Protestant | 5 | 10.0% |
| Born Again | 4 | 8.0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| Courses | | |
| Education | 25 | 50.0 |
| Criminology | 25 | 50.0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

As can be gleaned from the table above, majority of the respondents are female that is 28(56.0%). The Islam sect is the greater respondents that are 20 (40.0%), and the least is Born Again that is 4 (8.0%). In terms of their course, they are equality divided into 25 respondents each.

The second research question that this study sought to answer was, "Are you aware about interfaith marriage?"

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of respondent's perception on Interfaith Marriage.

| Item | Frequency | | Total |
|---|-----------|---------|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| Are you aware about interfaith marriage?" | 48(96%) | 2(4.0%) | 50 |
| Total | 48 | 2 | 50 |

The table indicates that the students of Teacher Education and BS Criminology are very aware on the idea of Interfaith Marriage. Most of the respondents answered “yes” that is 48 (96 %) and only 2 answered “no” that is 4.0%.

According to the study of Prince (1956, 1966) ^{[35]-[36]} that explored college student and Catholic attitudes toward interfaith marriage at the University of Idaho, he found out that 59% of the students (mostly Protestants and Catholics would like to marry outside their religious faith. Also those students were more willing to marry outside their religious faith if the marital partner converts to their religions or bring up children according to their faith.

The third research question that this study sought to answer was, “What is the level of perception of the student of Basilan State College in terms of;

- a) Marrying someone with different religion and requiring your partner to convert in your religion,
- b) And if interfaith marriage is accepted in your family?”

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Items (N = 50).

| Variables | Frequency | | Total |
|---|-----------|------------|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| a) Marrying someone with different religion and requiring your partner to convert in your religion. | 39 (79%) | 11 (22.0) | 50 |
| Total | 39 | 11 | 50 |
| b) If interfaith marriage is accepted in your family. | 31 (62%) | 19 (38.0%) | 50 |
| Total | 31 | 19 | 50 |

The table shows that on the terms “*marrying someone with different religion and requiring your partner to convert in your religion*”, most of the respondents answered yes with 39 or 79% agree with the condition and 11 or 22.0% disagree with the condition.

While on the terms “*if interfaith marriage is accepted in your family*” most of the respondents answered yes with 31 or 62% and no with 19 or 38.0%.

Interfaith marriage, traditionally called mixed marriage, is marriage between partners professing different religions. This definition does not sufficiently clear to describe the real context of meaning applied in the interfaith marriage in Malaysia. It is because, in Malaysia, a non-Muslim who wishes to marry a Muslim must convert into Islam before the marriage can be recognized as legally valid.

A study done by Sebastian and Parameswaran (2007) ^[37] stated that a large number of Chinese in Malaysia converted to facilitate intermarriages with Muslims. The same argument given by Osman Chuah (2008) ^[38] that mixed racial marriages of converts that leads to the conversion into Islam are quite frequent. It is a common phenomenon to highlight that conversion to Islam due to marriage not only related to the Chinese society but also the other non-Muslim ethnic groups such as Indians, Orang Asli and the natives of Sabah.

The fourth research question that this study sought to answer was, “Is there a significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in his/her religion among male and female?”

Table 5. Significance on the Difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in his/her religion among male and female (N = 50).

| Variable | Mean | | T Value | P Value | Remark |
|---|------|--------|---------|---------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | | | |
| • Requiring partner to convert in your religion among male and female | 1.09 | 1.32 | - 2.103 | .041 | Significant |

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 5 shows the significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in your religion among male and female.

There is a significant difference on the perception of requiring partner to convert in your religion among male and female, $t(45.75) = -2.103, p = .041$. The findings revealed that since the p value ($p = .041$) is lesser than assumed alpha level of significance of .05, therefore there is a significant difference between male and female on the perception of requiring partner to convert in your religion among male and female.

According to Leng, Jones, and Mohammad (2009) ^[39] there is a stark division of jurisdiction in family law between civil and sharia courts, non-Muslims can only marry Muslims after conversion to Islam. This effectively means that the issue of marriage is intricately mixed with the issue of religious conversion. Although the issue of religious conversion is actually independent of marriage issues, the reality is that these two sets of issues are linked for persons who wish to contract marriages across the Muslim-non-Muslim divide. On the basis of Malaysian society (Osman et al, 2008) a new convert always feel that he is a marginalized man as he could not fit into the society of his own community of previous religion and he cannot also easily integrate into the new Malay community. His religion is no longer with his own previous ethnic group and he has become only a new member in the Islamic ummah.

IV. CONCLUSION

In multicultural and multi-religious community like ours, individuals have ample opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds; intimate interfaith relationships will likely be on the rise. The notion of interfaith marriage in our college is accepted by our college students. Our college students approve the conversion of faith when marrying somebody of different religious faith. The families of the respondent accept the idea of interfaith marriage. The interfaith marriage culture had an important role for social integration which created harmony in living together in relations to the Catholic and Muslim community like ours. Moreover, the interfaith marriage or mix-marriage that causes conversion to other religion has become a common culture for the native people of the province particularly among Muslims male. Inter-ethnic romantic relationships, in particular marriage, are considered to be an indicator of diminishing social distance between various ethnic groups in the province.

V. RECOMMENDATION

1. To further perform a study on marital satisfaction and religion when accepting interfaith marriage.
2. And to conduct a study on the consequences of interfaith marriage to the offspring and his/her spiritual community.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Dr. Haipa Abdurahim-Salain was born on February 27, 1976. She finished her college degree at Basilan State College where she took Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and graduated in 2003. She finished her Master's Degree and Doctor's Degree in the same school in 2011 and 2015 respectively. She is a certified accredit or of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP), Inc. She had presented a research paper entitled "Teaching Performance of the Basilan State College Faculty: A Differentiation by Personal and Professional Attributes", during the First International Multidisciplinary Research Conference on August 19-21, 2016 at Kay Hotel and Residences, Angeles City. Salain had attended various seminars such as the Research Capability Building on December 17-18, 2016 at Marcia Business Hotel, Zamboanga City; National Youth Congress 2016, A Simulation of Parliament to Formulate a Youth Legislative Agenda for Sustainable Development on December 14-16, 2016 at Romulo Hall, Teachers' Camp, Baguio City.