

Mualaf Manado: Post-Conversion Type and Religious Life

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tipe mualaf berdasarkan motif konversi dan mengaitkannya dengan kehidupan keagamaan mualaf pasca konversi. Konversi agama merupakan bagian dari dinamika keagamaan di kota Manado yang kondisi masyarakatnya heterogen dan multikultur. Meskipun merupakan fenomena sosial, keputusan menjadi mualaf merupakan hal yang personal. Selain itu, perpindahan ke agama minoritas merupakan peristiwa unik karena individu mendobrak tatanan sosial yang mapan. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Data diambil dengan wawancara dan observasi kepada 15 mualaf yang tersebar di beberapa kecamatan di kota Manado. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan motifnya, terdapat 3 tipe konversi agama, yaitu affectional, intelektual dan mystical conversion. Terdapat pula tipe gabungan dari ketiga tipe tersebut, yaitu mysctical-affectional, intelektual-affectional, eksperimental-affectional dan intelektual-eksperimental-affectional conversion. Tipe konversi tersebut menunjukkan kehidupan keagamaan yang berbeda pada masing-masing mualaf. Mualaf tipe affectional conversion cenderung kurang berkomitmen pada ritual keagamaan, terumata yang sifatnya personal. Sementara mualaf dengan tipe lainnya mempunyai kesadaran bahwa agama merupakan tanggungjawab pribadi, sehingga kualitas kehidupannya pun lebih baik.

Kata Kunci: mualaf, motif konversi, tipe konversi, kehidupan keagamaan

Abstract

This article discusses the type of mualaf based on conversion motives and relates it to the religious life after conversion. Religious conversion is part of the religious dynamics in Manado, which has a heterogeneous and multicultural society. Although it is a social phenomenon, the decision to mualaf is a personal matter. In addition, conversion to a

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minority religion is a unique event because individuals break through the established social order. This article uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through interviews and observations with 15 mualaf spread across the districts of Manado. The results of this research showed that based on their motives, there were three types of religious conversion, namely affectional, intellectual, and mystical conversion. There was also a combination of types, namely mystical-affectional, intellectual-affectional, experimental-affectional, and intellectual-experimental-affectional conversion. These conversion types show different religious lives in each mualaf. Mualaf, with an affectional conversion type, tends to be less committed to religious rituals, especially in personal worship. Meanwhile, converts with other types are aware that religion is a personal responsibility, so the quality of their religious life is better.

Keywords: *mualaf, conversion motives, conversion type, religious life.*

Introduction

Manado is a city rich in cultural and religious diversity. This background creates a unique multicultural atmosphere (Nelwan & Kawung, 2020). Various ethnic groups such as Minahasa, Sangir, Bolaang Mongondow, and other ethnic groups who came from outside Manado live side by side, preserving local traditions and wisdom.

Religion is also an important aspect of multiculturalism in Manado. Until 2022, the North Sulawesi Central Bureau of Statistics recorded the percentage of Christianity as 62.94%, Catholicism as 0.05%, Islam as 30.95%, Hinduism as 0.17%, Buddhism as 0.63%, and Confucianism as 0.02% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). The people of Manado are known to have a high image of tolerance amidst their religious and cultural diversity, especially in eastern Indonesia (Suleman, 2017). In the diversity of ethnicity and religion, religious conversion is part of the dynamics of the socio-religious life of Manado society (Salma & Rajafi, 2020). Religious conversion can be defined as a change of belief in the opposite direction to the previous belief (Zakiyah, 2005). Meanwhile, according to Heinrich, religious conversion is the act of an individual or group entering or converting to another religion that is different from the previous religion (Heinrich, 1973).

From the data collected by the author, religious conversions to Islam or *mualaf* are quite significant in the city of Manado. The word *mualaf* refers to individuals who have recently embraced Islam (Sarib et al., 2024). From the results of interviews with the KUA of Mapanget sub-district, throughout 2022-2023, the number of *mualaf* reached 253 people (Interview with Marleni, 2023). Data from the Tikala Sub-district KUA shows that the number of *mualaf* in 2022 is 148 people (Interview with Mantau, 2024). This shows a significant increase compared to ten years ago, when there were only dozens of people in each sub-district (Syuhudi, 2016).

Meanwhile, from the *mualaf* organization, the head of *Majelis Mualaf North Sulawesi* (MMS) also stated that the increase of *mualaf* in MMS is quite consistent, which is around 20-30 people every year. Until now, there are about 145 members, but those who are active in regular meetings every 2 weeks are around 15-30 people. Usually, active members are those who are eager to learn Islam (Interview with Sabudu, 2023), likewise with the Aya Sofia National Mualaf Center organization in Manado City. In two years, 2020 to 2022, the number of registered *mualaf* is 175 people (Interview with Moningka, 2023).

Both from KUA, MMS, and MCN Aya Sofia, most of the process of converting to Islam is motivated by marriage. However, there are those who are still firmly committed to Islam even though their marriage failed (Interview with Sabudu, 2023). In addition to marriage, there are also motivations to *mualaf* to Islam due to interest in Islam and of their own accord. The process of becoming a *mualaf* is certainly influenced by many factors, including theological factors, psychological factors, educational factors, and sociological factors (Hendropuspito, 1993). Although a social phenomenon, conversion is an intricate and complex individual journey (Ozyurek, 2018).

In essence, religious conversion is a fundamental change and process of reorganizing self-identity, the meaning of life, and individual activities (Fahriana & Lufaei, 2020). *Mualaf* are expected to understand and practice the norms of their newly adopted religion. So, the decision to become a convert certainly changes aspects of a person's life, including their religious life.

To explain the conversion to Islam, discussing the motives behind someone becoming a *mualaf* can show how the process of experience and dynamics of individual considerations. According to Lewis R. Rambo, these diverse motives also form the individual's religious identity after conversion. Rambo divides converts into six types based on their conversion motives, namely intellectual conversion, mystical conversion, experimental conversion, affectional conversion, revivalism conversion, and coercive conversion (Rambo, 1999). These motives navigate their new identity as Muslims, including the challenges faced in everyday religious life. This article describes the conversion motives of *mualaf* in Manado. Then, it classifies them into types of religious conversion with Rambo's theory and relates them to post-conversion religious life.

Literature Review

There have been several studies on conversion to Islam, for example, in the book *Counseling Muslims: Handbook of Mental Health Issues and Interventions*, 88

chapter *Converts to Islam* by Sameera Ahmed. The chapter discusses the psychological, social, and cultural dynamics of individuals converting to Islam. This chapter highlights the challenges that *mualaf* often face, including identity reconstruction, potential rejection by family or community, and the process of integrating Islamic practices into their daily lives. *Mualaf* often experiences major changes in how they see themselves as they try to reconcile their old identities with their new religious beliefs. This process can be an enriching experience but also a challenging one, especially when confronting social stereotypes about Islam. Sameera Ahmed emphasizes the importance of a culturally sensitive counseling approach for *mualaf*. Therapeutic practices are recommended to honor their spiritual journey while addressing potential psychological challenges (Ahmad, 2013).

The topic related to *mualaf* and radicalism in Europe, Emmanuel Karagiannis discusses post-conversion religious patterns. He examines the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in Europe, focusing on the mechanisms that may lead some converts to radicalization. The article highlights that while most converts are law-abiding citizens, a small number of them become part of jihadi networks and engage in terrorist activities. The author emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue, de-stigmatization, and strengthening anti-discrimination laws for converts to reduce the risk of radicalization. This article recommends a community-based approach to addressing this issue, including working with Muslim leaders and communities. This strategy aims to address the challenge of radicalization without creating further stigma (Karagiannis, 2012).

The research about *mualaf* in Manado City, especially regarding the behavior and interpretation of religious norms. Suprijati Sarib et al. examined the views of *musaf* on the understanding and practice of polygamy through the perspective of Islamic law and the social challenges faced. The results of this study show that there are differences in the views of *mualaf* regarding polygamy; some accept it as part of Islamic law, and some reject it. Among the influencing factors are religious interpretation, pre-conversion values, and legal and social barriers. Legal barriers include the difficulty of obtaining a polygamy license from the court. Socially, polygamy contradicts the value of monogamy adopted by the majority of Christians in Manado (Sarib et al., 2024).

Research on *mualaf* in Manado was also conducted by Muhammad Rizqi Kader et al. In this research, the author explores the strategy of religious moderation in *mualaf* assemblies, especially in the Majelis Mualaf Sulawesi Utara

(MMS). Using the theory of David Hunger and Thomas L. Wheelen, the author divides the religious moderation education strategy into three stages, namely strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Each stage has been implemented at the Majelis Mualaf Sulawesi Utara (MMS) by formulating a vision, mission, and strategy, conducting routine activities, and evaluating them. The implication of the implementation of the religious moderation education strategy is to help *qualify*, understand, and practice Islam moderately, along with the ability to carry out the main obligations of a Muslim, such as prayer and reading the Qur'an (Kader et al., 2024).

Furthermore, an article by Muhammad Irfan Syuhudi discusses the pattern of coaching *mualaf* in the city of Manado. The author found that the guidance of *mualaf* has not received attention from either the Ministry of Religion or the Manado city government. The guidance of *mualaf* is carried out by community organizations and individuals. There are three stages in the model of coaching *mualaf*, namely reading and writing the Qur'an, prayer procedures, and religious knowledge. The coaching time varies, ranging from one to three times a week (Syuhudi, 2016).

In this article, the researcher intends to further review the conversion process of *mualaf* to Islam to find their motives. Using Lewis R. Rambo's theory, the motives are classified into six types, namely intellectual conversion, mystical conversion, experimental conversion, inner conversion, renewal conversion, and coercive conversion (Rambo, 1993). Furthermore, researchers analyze how these motives play a role in shaping the religious life of *mualaf* after conversion.

Conceptual Framework

The formulation of the problem that has been determined by the researcher requires the support of the theory used as the foundation for data analysis in the study. Researchers focus on studying mullahs who experience religious changes and are strongly related to individual mullahs, which include feelings, responses, and adaptations to the environment based on the life experiences of *mualafs*. Researchers used the theory initiated by Lewis R. Rambo about religious conversion. According to Lewis R. Rabo's opinion, religious conversion is a stage in the implementation of a change in the life of a person who carries out the conversion (Rambo, 1993). Changes that occur in the life of a person are closely related to the interaction model between individuals, social contexts, and local cultural influences, resulting in the implementation of complex religious conversions. This phenomenon forms reasoning in deep thinking of an individual to commit or build trust when in a new community, namely the Muslim

environment.

Academics and interdisciplinary researchers, such as psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, have different opinions on providing definitions related to the term conversion. Jalaluddin explains that conversion linguistically has the meaning of change, repentance, and moving religion (Jalaluddin, 2016). William James, as quoted by Jalaluddin, defines religious conversion as generally related to psychological problems and the influence or impact of the social environment when a person is in it. Then, Raimond F. Paloutzian, in his scientific writing entitled *Religious Conversion and Personality Change*, explains the word conversion actually comes from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, which means return, turn around, or a series of religious changes that occur in a person from an event, institution, ideology, and expectations in the life experience experienced (Paloutzian et al., 1999).

Rambo explains that religious conversion is part of a revolutionary process that may occur within the scope of the life of a religious conversion actor, which includes a particular event, orientation, institution, and ideology (Rambo, 1993). On the other hand, religious conversion is actually not a stand-alone event involving only one cause of religious conversion factors; it involves religious phenomena that are interconnected with one another. Therefore, in the event of religious conversion, an in-depth study is needed from a personal, religious, social, or cultural perspective. Thus, Lewis R. Rambo has the wisdom to interpret religious conversion based on various perspectives from models and methods, that the event of religious conversion purely occurs without any tendency of intimidation and is truly sincere and honest.

Lewis R. Rambo divides into six motives for religious conversion by *mualaf*. Based on conversion motives. First, Intellectual Conversion. In this motive, a person tries to understand religion or spiritual things from books, television, articles, and other media that have nothing to do with the benefits of social contact. In this case, a person tries to expand alternatives to actively learn about new religions. This second motive is considered an early form of conversion. Generally, mystical conversion is something that happens suddenly and leaves a mark on a person. For example, visions, whispers, voices, or abnormal experiences. Third, experimental conversion. The motive for this type of conversion is greater leniency or religious freedom so that the convert has the opportunity to gain diverse religious experiences. Experimental conversion is related to efforts to expand various religious choices. Here, the convert has the

potential to find where he can fulfill his spiritual needs. By following a certain pattern of religious activity, the convert can assess whether the religion supports the truth they need or not (Rambo, 1993).

Fourth is the affective motive. This conversion motive emphasizes interpersonal relationships or bonds as an important factor in the conversion process. Converts are bound by love and mutual support and strengthened by a supportive community. Fifth, the revivalist motive is a type of religious conversion that involves confirmation that comes from many individuals and groups in the form of strong encouragement. Emotionally, the individual is awakened so that his behavior is driven by his strong beliefs. The method used is usually through renewal encounters through music and sermons that touch personal emotions.

Sixth, the coercive motive is that there must be a special condition that becomes a driving factor so that religious conversion is carried out; it can be in the form of encouragement given by others. The conversion process occurs through brainwashing, coercion, or shaping the mind with certain programs. At some level, there is strong pressure on a person to engage, conform, and admit it. Sometimes, threats such as intimidation, accusations, or terrorizing a person's personal life may leave him with no other choice but to embrace a certain ideology. The function of the theory coined by Lewis R. Rambo is important to know and understand the stages and processes of religious conversion experienced by *mualaf* in Manado City.

Research Method

This research was conducted in Manado City from July to August 2024. The method used in this research is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods are used to describe phenomena based on the informant's point of view. The goal is to find diverse realities and develop a holistic understanding of a phenomenon (Hamed Hilal & Said Alabri, 2013).

Data collection techniques were obtained through interviews and observations. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain information about the religious conversion process of the *mualaf*. Meanwhile, observation was carried out by directly observing the religious activities followed by *mualaf*. Furthermore, the data obtained was then reviewed, reduced, and presented through description and verification (Lexy J. Moleong, 2017).

The data of this study were obtained from informants, namely *mualaf* in Manado who were randomly selected, including place of residence, age, occupation and how long

they have been mualaf. The supporting data is obtained from reference books, scientific journals and previous research relevant to this theme.

The phenomenological approach is used to reveal subjective meanings that stem from individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology studies forms of experience from the perspective of the individual experiencing it (Novayani, 2019). In this case, phenomenology serves to keep the conversion experience unique and distinctive to each individual.

Results

Diversity of Motives and Conversion Types: Affectional, Experimental, Mystical, and Intellectual.

The process and experience of becoming a *mualaf* are very diverse. According to Ozyurek, voluntary conversion, especially to a minority religion, is a rare act. Such conversions have a transformative power for individuals. Regardless of the goal, becoming a convert disrupts established social, cultural, and political structures (Ozyurek, 2018). Based on interviews that researchers have conducted with informants, the author explains the motives for converting converts in Manado as follows:

Table. 1: Conversion Motives of *Mualaf* Manado

No	Name	Gender	Age	Address	Long Time Convert to <i>Mualaf</i>	Motive
1	NJ	Female	27 year	Sumompo	2 year	Self-will
2	OK	Female	49 year	Sumompo	10 year	Married
3	HS	Female	35 year	Banjer	7 year	Married
4	CL	Female	34 year	Banjer	10 year	Married
5	TT	Male	47 year	Sea	12 year	Self-will
6	OS	Male	46 year	Sea	16 year	Self-will
7	RM	Female	31 year	Singkil	4 year	Married
8	NA	Female	26 year	Singkil	5 year	Married
9	NK	Female	45 year	Sumompo	12 year	Married
10	SN	Female	38 year	Tuminting	10 year	Married
11	MW	Male	19 year	Malalayang	4 year	Self-will
12	SM	Female	28 year	Malalayang	5 year	Married
13	YM	Male	32 year	Mapanget	8 year	Self-will
14	NW	Male	42 year	Tikala	7 year	Married
15	HA	Male	30 year	Tikala	5 year	Married

Broadly speaking, there are two motives for *mualaf*: marriage and self-will. Marriage is indeed the biggest factor in the process of becoming a *mualaf*. However, in the in-depth interviews, there are different details from the informants. Of the 10 informants who decided to *qualify* due to marriage, 7 of

them admitted that they converted because they followed their partner's religion. The decision came as a form of commitment and love as well as a desire to harmonize religious beliefs with their spouse.

Like Mrs. NK, she converted to *mualaf* twice. First, at the time of marriage, as a condition of marriage. Mrs. NK returned to her previous religion for 3 years. After the birth of her second child, Mrs. NK again became a *mualaf* until now. The decision was based on the consideration of being one religion with her husband so that her children would not be confused about choosing a religion. Mrs. NK's husband never forced her to convert to *mualaf* (Interview with NK, 2024).

Based on Lewis R. Rambo's theoretical framework, the author classifies seven *mualaf* who converted for the motive of marriage into the affectional-conversion type. They admitted that their prospective partners did not force them to convert before marriage. The informant's statement showed that their reason was to show commitment and love for their partners, as well as an effort to harmonize religion in the household. As happened to Mrs. OK and Mrs. NK, their husbands were their inspiration to convert to Islam. The kindness, attitude, and affection of their husbands made them bonded and dependent on each other. Marriage is promising and forms such a bond to be real and strong. In addition, the decision to convert to Islam is also certainly supported by the families of each partner.

Meanwhile, the author included the three *mualaf* whose conversion motive was also marriage in the combined conversion type. This is because they have different experiences and interpretations of conversion and marriage. Mrs. CL's interest in Islam was when she often heard sermons or religious lectures on television. Personally, Mrs. CL had also tried to find Muslim friends to help her interest, but she did not feel comfortable. When she met her future husband, she decided to convert to Islam (Interview with CL, 2024).

So, Mrs. CL's conversion type is Intellectual-affectional conversion. Her conversion began with her knowledge of Islam through religious lectures on television. Not stopping at one *tausiyah*, she deliberately listened to other lectures. This reason is strengthened by Mrs. CL's independent efforts to seek Islamic information through her friends. The affectional conversion type is clarified in the bond with the prospective partner and marriage that made Mrs. CL convert.

The combined conversion type between mystical and affectional conversion is found in Mrs. SN's process of converting to Islam. She is an informant who had a spiritual experience through a dream. Previously, she was a Church activist who hated Islam because of its polygamy teachings. However,

she once dreamed of meeting a man in a white robe, with a beard and emitting bright light. Not long after, a Muslim man came from Gorontalo and proposed to her. Mrs. SN decided to convert to Islam even though she received threats from her family (Interview with SN, 2024).

Mrs. SN interpreted her dream of meeting a man wearing a white turban and glowing as a whisper or spiritual experience. She considered it an early sign of Islam. The dream also made her determined to accept the proposal of her prospective partner and become a convert even though she did not know his background and faced threats from her parents.

Meanwhile, Mr. HA's conversion type is a combination of intellectual-experimental-affectional conversion. He started his interest in Islam because of spiritual doubt. So, he tried to get to know Islam because it was the most familiar religion in his environment. The author included the initial experiment in getting to know Islam in the experimental type. He continued his interest with intellectual efforts by exploring information about Islam through books, lectures, and social media. The determination to become a convert after meeting his partner.

Of the three informants mentioned by the researcher last, there are differences in interpreting marriage as a factor in religious conversion. They consider marriage to be the path they finally found after a process of attraction, spiritual doubt and spiritual experience. Converting and embracing Islam, for these three informants, are not only interpreted as obeying a certain value system, but it's understood as a spiritual experience.

The motives of the remaining five informants were their own will. Based on the information taken during the interview, the desire to embrace Islam was influenced by external factors in general. For Mrs. Nj, interest in Islam began with a neighbor who often helped her in difficult situations. For Mrs. NJ, the attitude of being ready to help regardless of religious background is the ideal behavior of a religious follower. Intense interaction and attachment to her neighbors finally made Mrs. NJ convert to Islam. (Interview with NJ, 2024).

According to the author, Mrs. NJ's conversion type is also included in the affectional conversion type. Although she converted because of her own desire, her conversion motive was not purely intellectual. Her interest began with her attachment to her Muslim neighbors, who always helped her. NJ's mother even searched for very little information about Islam independently. For her, the Islam practiced by her neighbors was the ideal religion.

Meanwhile, the other four informants were already familiar with Islamic teachings because some of their families were Muslim. Thus, interactions with Muslims occurred quite often. Mr. YM admitted that they rarely performed religious services in their previous religion. In a multireligious family, information about Islam was familiar to them. The one who influenced YM was his cousin, who asked why he rarely performed religious services and suggested that he learn about Islam. From here, he tried to study Islamic teachings and converted to Islam 6 months later. Mr. YM began to try to study Islam to rediscover his spirit of worship. He got information about Islamic teachings from his other siblings. At the age of 24, he converted to Islam because he felt that Islamic teachings suited him (Interview with YM, 2024).

Islam was the first religion that he could possibly learn because he was already familiar with it. YM dared to ask his Muslim brothers to learn Islam. After considering it, he finally became a *mualaf*. YM rediscovered the motivation to worship and be close to God (interview with YM, 2024). At this stage, YM's conversion type is experimental conversion. Meanwhile, his attachment to other families still plays a role in his decision to convert. Therefore, YM's conversion type is experimental-affectional conversion.

OS is an informant who also came from a multireligious family, and his educational environment from elementary school to high school was predominantly Muslim. According to him, it's not he who converted to Islam but rather Islam that came to him. The desire to learn about praying and reciting the Koran existed before he became a *mualaf*. OS felt that the desire to learn Islam was so strong that he could not resist it. There was a time when the desire came into his dreams and was like a whisper inviting him to pray. This was unnatural because he still adhered to another religion. After studying Islam for a long time and considering it deeply, at the age of 30, the intention was realized.

From the OS conversion process, the conversion type is mystical. OS interprets the process of becoming a *mualaf* as a form of entering Islam in him. A strong desire, sometimes through dreams and whispers, to learn Islam finally made him sure to become a convert. Although he is in a Muslim-majority environment and family, OS learns independently and is not influenced by external factors.

MW is the son of an interfaith couple. His father is Protestant and his mother is Muslim. In the past, he followed his father's religion. At the age of 13, he moved to Manado and lived in his mother's family environment, which was predominantly Muslim. His uncle was the one who opened his heart to become a

mualaf. His understanding of Islam began when his uncle invited him to share religious knowledge. MW then compared his religious teachings with Islamic teachings, especially regarding the concept of God. From MW's perspective, the teachings of monotheism were simpler, more logical, and easier for him to accept. He also saw the manifestation of Islamic teachings from his uncle's good behavior. Towards the end of the age of 15, he finally decided to become a *mualaf* (Interview with MW, 2024).

MW admitted that his interest in Islam began when he moved to the city of Manado and lived in his mother's family environment. From there, he began to question his religious teachings. He independently sought information through various media, lectures, and books. He found confusion in the concept of divinity that he had always adhered to. Although through an intellectual search process, MW's conversion motive still had an affectional element because he based the process on his family. He was emotionally attached to his mother and family, who played an important role in the process of his religious conversion. Therefore, his conversion type is intellectual-affectional conversion.

From the explanation above, the conversion types of *mualaf* can be concluded through the following table:

Table 2: Conversion Type of *Mualaf* Manado with Rambo's Theory

No	Name	Motive of Conversion	Type of Conversion
1	NJ	Self-will	Affectional Conversion
2	OK	Married	Affectional Conversion
3	HS	Married	Affectional Conversion
4	CL	Married	Intellectual-Affectional Conversion
5	TT	Self-will	Intellectual Conversion
6	OS	Self-will	Mystical Conversion
7	RM	Married	Affectional Conversion
8	NA	Married	Affectional Conversion
9	NK	Married	Affectional Conversion
10	SN	Married	Mystical-Affectional Conversion
11	MW	Self-will	Intellectual-Affectional Conversion
12	SM	Married	Affectional Conversion
13	YM	Self-will	Experimental-Affectional Conversion
14	NW	Married	Affectional Conversion
15	HA	Married	Intellectual-experimental-Affectional Conversion

Post-Conversion Religious Life

For most people, religion is very important to life. Religion serves as a lens through which reality is perceived and interpreted. Therefore, humans associate meaning with religion. Religion provides a framework for understanding individuals and societies in living life. As a system, religion creates beliefs, values, rituals, and symbols that help humans understand their existence, answer existential questions, and moral direction. Religion functions not only as a spiritual guide but also as a means to create identity, social solidarity, and order in life. Like other meaning systems, religion influences a person's beliefs, goals, and even emotions (Silberman, 2005). Religion may only focus on the sacred. However, each individual can have a different scope for this sacred thing so that the influence of religion can be wider in life (Pargament, Kenneth I, 2005).

For *mualaf*, the new form of identity after religious conversion is manifested in obedience. In Islam, obedience includes rituals, orientation, and behavior. Ritual is the Muslim's obedience to the pillars of Islam or things related to the procedures for worship. The scope of orientation is the individual's belief that always directs all things with faith. Behavior is a realm that reflects religious beliefs even though the practices carried out have nothing to do with theological content (Thomas B. Pepinsky, 2018).

According to the researcher's observation, the conversion motives of the *mualaf* are related to their religious life after conversion. From the informants whose conversion motives were purely affectional, their religious life tended to be shallow. Basic questions such as the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam cannot be answered properly. Of the 8 informants with a similar type, 5 of them could only mention 3 pillars of faith, the other 3 were able to mention 5 pillars of faith.

In the ritual, they admitted that they were still less committed, especially in the five daily prayers. The tendency of *mualafs* with affectional conversion is to depend on their partners, relatives, or closest people who inspire them to convert. Like Informant NK, who has been a convert for approximately 12 years, admitted that he is not yet fluent in reading the Qur'an and praying. For the past 5 years, NK has been intensively studying Islam because there is a *mualaf* community in his new residence. Similar things also occur in other informants. According to the author, converts with the affectional conversion type are less aware that religion is a personal responsibility.

The influence of religion on life depends on each individual. This can be seen in Mrs. SN, whose conversion type is mystical-affectional conversion. In the

fifth year of her conversion, SN decided to wear a veil (*cadar*). The marriage that convinced her *to become Mualaf* did not go well. Her husband was violent, irresponsible, and even practiced polygamy. The pressure to return to her original religion always came from her family. However, she realized that marriage was not the only reason she converted. Therefore, in such a pressing situation, she returned to the teachings of Islam by praying and remembering God. In fact, the difficulties after marriage finally encouraged her to study Islam more deeply.

Mr. OS, who is also included in the mystical conversion type, has a religious life that is almost similar to SN. He has good knowledge of the pillars of faith and Islam. Although not fluent, he is able to read the Qur'an and recite prayers. The ritual that he has not been able to carry out well is the Ramadan fast because he has acute gastric pain. He has done the five daily prayers and Friday prayers routinely until now. Before converting to Islam, OS had studied the procedures for prayer, reading the Qur'an, and the pillars of Islam. His commitment to worship had indeed existed since he decided to become a convert. For him, changing religions means committing to the religion he has just embraced.

Informants with intellectual and intellectual-affectional conversion types also have good religious lives. Supported by a family that is mostly Muslim, they also have the awareness to increase religious knowledge. MW, who has been a convert for 4 years, admitted that his knowledge of Islam is not yet deep. Therefore, he consistently follows Islamic studies both at the University and at the Mosque near his residence. His commitment to worship is still weak; sometimes, he does not pray the five daily prayers. However, he always tries to always pray Friday prayers.

The same religious expression was shown by female informants. They all wore the hijab and dressed to cover their aurat. All of them wore the hijab for one to two years after converting. Meanwhile, knowledge related to women's *fiqh* was obtained from the Islamic community (*Majelis Ta'lim*) and from other information media, such as YouTube.

Rejection from family is common for informants after they become *mualaf*, like SN, who was ostracized by her family for up to two years. Informant CL was not allowed by her family to attend her parents' funeral because she was wearing a hijab. On average, the rejection lasted for two to three years. Meanwhile, informants who came from multireligious family backgrounds did not experience rejection. In the social environment, the informants did not face any serious challenges. Although there was rejection, it was only from a small number of

people. The tolerant and heterogeneous culture of Manado City does not place *mualaf* in an ostracized group. However, to strengthen their social position, they affiliate with *mualaf* organizations or the Islamic community in their environment.

Factors that influence religious life after conversion are diverse. However, conversion motives have a strong influence in shaping the religious meaning of *mualaf*. They form personal and religious identities according to conversion motives. This is clearly seen in the differences in the religious lives of individuals whose conversion type is affectional and other *mualaf* whose conversion type is intellectual, mystical, or a combination type.

Discussion

Questioning Rambo's Conversion Theory: The Complexity of Motives for *Mualaf* Manado in the Context of Tolerance and Diversity.

In this research, there are two motives that make informants convert to Islam, which are self-will and marriage. In general, religious conversion can occur due to internal and external factors (Ilahi, K., Rabaim, J., & Sarifandi, 2017). Internal factors include psychological crisis conditions from within the individual. At the same time, external factors are influences from outside the individual, such as marriage, economy, and others. In the context of the results of this research, the conversion motive based on one's self-will is a conversion influenced by internal factors, while the conversion motive based on marriage is influenced by internal factors.

Agous Dariyo, in his research *Conversion of Religion in Muslim Marriage Lives*, analyzed five converts (1 man and four women) who experienced religious conversion from non-Muslim religions to Islam before and during marriage. In Indonesia, Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage emphasizes that marriage can be carried out by a married couple who are of the same religion. Thus, if there are still prospective couples who have different religions, then one of the partners, both men and women, must agree to follow one of the religions. This consideration causes informants to convert to Islam so that their marriage is legal in religion and the State (Dariyo, 2021).

One of the five informants decided to convert to Islam by marrying an economically established partner. Because she had experienced difficult economic conditions with her previous partner, in this case, religious conversion is not only caused by the desire to legalize marriage but also to obtain economic stability in household life. Agous Dariyo's research shows that the reasons individuals make religious conversions to Islam actually tend to be pragmatic rather than spiritual reasons (Dariyo, 2021). This conclusion is in line with the findings of this study. Marriage is indeed the biggest factor in religious conversion to Islam in Manado. Seven out of ten informants who converted

with the motive of marriage also had the purpose of harmonizing religion with their partner in order to legalize their marriage.

Corroborating this conclusion, Izabela Kończak asserted that Russian women, especially ethnic Slavs, perceive that having the same religion in marriage is important for building a peaceful and harmonic family. Socially and culturally, a number of Izabela's informants believe that marriage to a Muslim man offers greater stability, responsibility, and respect than to a Slavic Russian man (Kończak, 2019).

The multicultural environment in Russia also facilitated the exposure of Russian women to the teachings of Islam. Therefore, conversion to Islam also occurs through personal reflection and spiritual search. Some women adopt Islam as a result of deep personal reflection, without external pressure. They are inspired by Islamic teachings that they see as more logical or in line with their spiritual needs (Kończak, 2019). Just like in Manado, the multicultural society makes it possible for everyone to learn about other religions easily. Moreover, Islam is the second largest religion practiced by the people in Manado. In this environment, acquaintance with Muslims not only enables marriage but also the transfer of religious knowledge. Through seeing people of other religions, a person can be inspired and motivated to conduct an intellectual and spiritual exploration that can lead a person to convert to Islam.

One of the reasons Europeans converted to Islam was to find an alternative religion to Christianity. This was seen in the first wave of conversions in England in the late nineteenth century, where people like William Quilliam turned to Islam as an alternative. In another way, the role of *dakwah* is crucial in the process of religious conversion. Islam is introduced by Muslim neighbors, colleagues, and friends. The internet and organizations engaged in Islamic *da'wah* are also significant (Karagiannis, 2012). This research shows another diversity of conversion motives depending on the time and conditions of the society prevailing at the time.

Lewis R. Rambo's proposed types of conversion were found to be inadequate in this study. The motives of the informants in the city of Manado did not fit neatly into Rambo's categories. While affectional conversion, which involves bonding with others, was one factor for conversion in Manado, there were also other factors at play, such as mystical and intellectual experiences. This led to a combined type of conversion. Furthermore, the research found no evidence of coercive conversion, indicating a tolerant atmosphere in the diverse Manado community. Additionally, *mualaf* did not face isolation in their social environment. Overall, this study reveals that Rambo's types of conversion may not fully capture the complexity of conversion experiences and motivations, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the subject.

Paloutzian et al. proved that conversion could lead to behavioral changes and modifications in self-definition, self-confidence, and life goals. However, it does not change the basic personality structure. Post-conversion, self-transformation experiences, such as a sense of "new life," peace, and joy, are possible for converts (Paloutzian et al., 1999). This kind of experience is experienced by converts in Manado, whether the motive is marriage or their own desire. For converts with affectional conversion, a sense of peace, security, and comfort is gained because they have embraced the same religion as their partner. That way, household life becomes more stable. Converts with mystical, intellectual, and experimental conversion types feel a "new chapter in their lives" because they have found a new purpose in life or fulfillment of spiritual needs that they did not get from their previous religion.

Religious life after conversion shows a distinct diversity (Dariyo, 2021). Converts adopt a new identity that is compatible with Islam. They no longer have emotional ties to the old religion. Diversity occurs in commitment to following the teachings of the new religion. Some people show high commitment, while others do not. It all depends on their level of involvement in worship and understanding of the new religion. Therefore, for those individuals who go through a process of intellectual discovery, mystical experience, or seeking information about Islam, their commitment to their religion is better.

Conclusion

The increasing number of converts in Manado indicates that Islam is growing in the city. This social phenomenon is also influenced by personal motives. Based on Lewis R. Rambo's theory, there are three types of religious conversion: affectionate, intellectual, and mystical. In addition, there is also a combined type, which is a combination of the three types. The existence of the combined type shows that Rambo's theory is inadequate to accommodate the complexity of the religious conversion motives of converts in Manado.

The results of this study also reveal that coercive conversion does not exist in the conversion motives of converts, which means strengthening tolerance in Manado. The different motives behind conversion also cause different variations in the religious life of converts. Those who belong to the affectional type tend to prioritize religious activities less, especially personal worship. In contrast, other types show a commitment to improving their religious life by continuously expanding their knowledge of Islam and worship.

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Interview with Delli Sabudu : Head of Mualaf Organization, Majelis Muallaf Sulawesi Utara (MMS) at January 2024, 10.30 WITA

Interview With Henni Moningka : Head of Mualaf Organization Aya Sofia Sulawesi Utara at Desember 2023, 13.00 WITA

Interview With Imran Mantau : Head of Religious Affairs Office (KUA) Mapanget at Desember 2023, 15.20 WITA

Interview with informant NJ, Manado, at 10th July 2024, 09.30 WITA

Interview with informant OK, Manado, at 10th July 2024, 09.50 WITA

Interview with informant HS, Manado at 10th July 2024, 10.00 WITA

Interview with informant CL, Manado at 10th July 2024, 11.00 WITA

Interview with informant TT, Manado at 15th July 2024, 09.10 WITA

Interview with informant OS, Manado at 16th July 2024, 09.30 WITA

Interview with informant RM, Manado at 19th July 2024, 10.00 WITA

Interview with informant NA, Manado at 19th July 2024, 10.05 WITA

Interview with informant NK, Manado at 21st Juli 2024, 11.00 WITA

Interview with informant SN, Manado at 2nd August 2024, 15.45 WITA

Interview with informant MW, Manado at 03rd August 2024, 14.00 WITA

Interview with informant YM, Manado at 03rd August 2024, 14.30 WITA

Interview with informant NW, Manado at 03rd August 2024, 15.00 WITA

Interview with informant HA, Manado at 03rd August 2024, 15.15 WITA