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# Mediated Legal Pluralism: Interfaith Marriage and the Reconfiguration of Legal Authority in Indonesian Online News

**Arifki Budia Warman,[1*] Riska Prawita,[1] Ismail Rumadan,[2] Fakhriyah Annisa Afroo,[3] Triyono Adi Saputro[4]**

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus, Batusangkar, Indonesia
[2]National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia
[3]Universitas Negeri Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia
[4]Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

[*]Correspondence: *arifkibudiawarman@uinmybatusangkar.ac.id jbkj*

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## Abstract

Interfaith marriage in Indonesia occupies a contested intersection of Islamic law, state law, judicial authority, and rights-based claims. However, how these competing normative positions are mediated in online news remains underexplored. This article examines how Indonesian online news constructs legal meaning and authority following the issuance of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs. Employing a qualitative socio-legal approach, the study analyzes 33 online news articles published between July and December 2023 by combining framing analysis with critical discourse analysis. The findings identify four dominant frames: legal certainty and uniformity, legal-religious legitimacy, rights and pluralism, and inconsistency in judicial implementation. The Supreme Court emerges as the central judicial reference point. At the same time, religious actors reinforce the Circular's normative legitimacy, rights-based organizations challenge it through constitutional and human rights claims, and responses from first-instance courts reveal tensions in its implementation. Online news coverage also frequently transforms the Circular's specific provisions concerning judicial approval of applications for interfaith marriage registration into a broader narrative of a "ban on interfaith marriage," while complex relationships among state law, religious norms, and judicial interpretation are condensed into claims attributed to particular institutions. The article conceptualizes this discursive mechanism as authority compression and argues that it contributes to mediated legal pluralism, a socio-legal configuration in which journalistic mediation unevenly structures the public visibility of competing normative orders and authorities. Thus, the study extends Islamic legal scholarship beyond norm production to include mediated circulation and the communicative reconfiguration of legal authority.

[*Perkawinan beda agama di Indonesia berada pada persinggungan yang diperdebatkan antara hukum Islam, hukum negara, otoritas yudisial, dan klaim berbasis hak. Namun, bagaimana berbagai posisi normatif yang berkompetisi tersebut dimediasi dalam pemberitaan daring masih belum banyak dikaji. Artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana pemberitaan daring di Indonesia mengonstruksi makna dan otoritas hukum setelah penerbitan Surat Edaran Mahkamah Agung (SEMA) No. 2 Tahun 2023 tentang Petunjuk bagi Hakim dalam Mengadili Perkara Permohonan Pencatatan Perkawinan Antar-Umat yang Berbeda Agama dan Kepercayaan. Dengan menggunakan*

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*pendekatan sosio-legal kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis 33 artikel berita daring yang diterbitkan antara Juli dan Desember 2023 dengan mengombinasikan analisis pembingkaian dan analisis wacana kritis. Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi empat pembingkaian dominan: kepastian dan kesatuan hukum, legitimasi hukum-keagamaan, hak dan pluralisme, serta inkonsistensi implementasi yudisial. Mahkamah Agung tampil sebagai rujukan yudisial sentral. Pada saat yang sama, aktor keagamaan memperkuat legitimasi normatif SEMA tersebut, organisasi berbasis hak menantangnya melalui klaim konstitusional dan hak asasi manusia, sedangkan respons pengadilan tingkat pertama memperlihatkan ketegangan dalam implementasinya. Pemberitaan juga kerap mengubah ketentuan spesifik SEMA mengenai pengabulan permohonan pencatatan perkawinan beda agama menjadi narasi yang lebih luas tentang "larangan perkawinan beda agama", sementara hubungan kompleks antara hukum negara, norma agama, dan interpretasi yudisial dipadatkan menjadi klaim yang diatribusikan kepada institusi tertentu. Artikel ini mengonseptualisasikan mekanisme diskursif tersebut sebagai kompresi otoritas dan berargumentasi bahwa mekanisme ini berkontribusi pada pluralisme hukum termediasi, yaitu konfigurasi sosio-legal ketika mediasi jurnalistik menstrukturkan secara tidak setara visibilitas publik tatanan normatif dan otoritas yang berkompetisi. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memperluas kajian hukum Islam dari produksi norma menuju sirkulasi termediasi dan rekonfigurasi komunikatif otoritas hukum.*]

**Keywords**: Authority Compression, Interfaith Marriage, Legal Authority, Media Framing, Mediated Legal Pluralism, Online News.

## Introduction

Interfaith marriage is a family law issue that vividly illustrates the intersection of religious norms, state law, religious freedom, and individual autonomy within a pluralistic society.[1] The issue concerns not only the validity of marriage under religious law but also the limits of state authority in regulating family life and the relationship between religious authority and state law.[2] Within the *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) tradition itself, discussions about marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims are far from monolithic. Debates over the category of *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book), the normative foundations of interfaith marriage, differing rules for Muslim men and women, and the relevance of social context demonstrate the complexity of the interpretive processes through which legal opinions are formulated.[3] This normative complexity acquires a new dimension when it enters the digital public sphere, where legal and religious arguments are translated into more concise and readily recognizable forms of communication. In this context, media function not merely as channels for legal

1 Judith Koschorke, "Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: The Case of Interfaith Marriages Involving Muslims," in *Studies in Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 49 (Brill Academic Publishers, 2019), 199-260; Ibnudin Ibnudin et al., "Reconstruction Interfaith Marriage Law in Indonesia: Relevance of Sociology Knowledge and Maqasid Sharia," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 25, no. 1 (2025): 70–86; Dahlia Haliah Ma'u et al., "Interfaith Marriage Involving Muslims in Indonesia: Legal Pluralism and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah Perspectives," *Al-Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum* 10, no. 2 (2025): 155–69.

2 Imam Kamaluddin et al., "State-Mediated Fiqh and the Regulation of Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Southeast Asia," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 20, no. 1 (2026): 149–72; Syarif Syarif et al., "Negotiating Sacred Law: Qur'anic Hermeneutics, Legal Pluralism, and Interfaith Marriage in Muslim-Majority Countries," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 2 (2025): 379–401.

3 Ayse Elmali-Karakaya, "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: Classical Islamic Resources and Contemporary Debates on Muslim Women's Interfaith Marriages," *Religions* 13, no. 8 (2022): 726; Hermanto Harun et al., "Rethinking the Legal Status of Non-Muslims in Islamic Law: Al-Muwāṭinūn and the Constitutional Framework of Citizenship in Indonesia," *Khazanah Hukum* 7, no. 2 (2025): 156–73.

and religious information but also as arenas in which norms, actors, and claims to legitimacy acquire differing degrees of visibility.[4] Interfaith marriage, therefore, cannot be adequately approached solely through the question of whether such a marriage is permissible or prohibited. Equally important are questions of who defines its legal meaning, which normative sources are invoked in doing so, and how such authority is represented in the digital public sphere.

The question of authority is particularly significant in Indonesia because the regulation of marriage is shaped by a close interrelationship between state law and religious norms. Article 2(1) of Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage establishes religious law and belief as the basis for determining the validity of marriage.[5] In practice, this provision interacts with population administration law, religious doctrine, *fatwā* (legal opinion), judicial practice, and institutional policy, creating a complex interpretive field surrounding interfaith marriage. This configuration reached a critical point of articulation with the issuance of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs. The Circular seeks to promote certainty and uniformity in the application of the law by instructing judges to refer to Article 2(1) and Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law and to deny applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions and beliefs.[6] Although the Circular constitutes a judicial policy intervention in response to variations in judicial interpretation and practice, once it enters online news coverage, it becomes intertwined with religious norms, administrative law, human rights claims, political interests, and the interpretations advanced by diverse actors. Therefore, it provides an empirical context for examining how legal and religious authority is represented in public narratives.

Existing scholarship on interfaith marriage can be categorized into three primary analytical strands. First, legal and jurisprudential approaches focus on marital validity, the relationship between religious and state law, legal pluralism, judicial interpretation, and the protection of human rights.[7] Studies within this strand debate the boundaries of prohibition and permissibility under Islamic law and their interaction with legislation and judicial practice,[8] including tensions among religious norms, religious freedom, and the right to form a family.[9] Second, sociocultural and anthropological approaches examine interfaith marriage

4 Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 119–35.

5 "Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage," January 2, 1974, Article 2 paragraph (1).

6 "Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs," July 17, 2023, 1.

7 See: Ratno Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam: The Case of Interfaith Marriage," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 10, no. 2 (2008): 179–91; Iwan Setiawan et al., "Reforming Marriage Law in Indonesia: A Critical Examination of Islamic Law on the Ban of Interfaith Marriages," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 2 (2024): 179–98; Dewi Zahra Setyawati et al., "Beneath The Same Sky, Different Faiths: Why Is Interfaith Marriage Prohibited in Islam?," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (2024): 229–46.

8 See: Ratu Durotun Nafisah, "Judging and Social Cohesion: The Case of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, March 25, 2026, 1–25; Erfaniah Zuhriah et al., "Legal Construction of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Legal Reasoning and Multireligious Ratio Legis," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 5, no. 1 (2026): 199–260.

9 See: M. Thahir Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Legal, Religious, and Human Rights Perspectives," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2308174; Y. Sonafist and

as a social practice through which identity, tolerance, coexistence, and community boundaries are negotiated.[10] Research from this perspective demonstrates that interfaith marriage practices are shaped not only by law and doctrine but also by migration, social diversity, cultural change, and intercommunity relations.[11] Third, psychological and relational approaches shift attention toward the experiences of couples and families,[12] particularly marital satisfaction, religious identity, personal differentiation, decision-making authority, and strategies for navigating differences in religious belief.[13] These existing studies provide important insights into the norms governing marriage, the social contexts in which marriages occur, and the experiences of those who enter into them. Nevertheless, they do not fully account for an increasingly significant dimension of digitally mediated societies: how the plurality of norms and authorities surrounding interfaith marriage is translated, selected, and rendered visible when legal contestation enters online news coverage.

This limitation creates an analytical space at the intersection of interfaith marriage studies, legal pluralism, and media studies. Although several studies have examined controversies surrounding interfaith marriage from the perspectives of religious leaders and civil society organizations, as well as its representation in online news portals,[14] relatively little scholarship has systematically explained how journalistic mediation configures relationships among judicial, religious, political-administrative, and rights-based authorities when judicial policy enters the digital public sphere. Using Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 as an empirical case, this article argues that online news coverage does not merely represent legal plurality but actively mediates the visibility of and relationships among competing authorities through the selection, attribution, and hierarchization of normative claims—a process conceptualized here as authority compression. Through this process, the complexity of normative sources, interpretations, and grounds of legitimacy may be condensed by

Henny Yuningsih, "Islamic Law, the State, and Human Rights: The Contestation of Interfaith Marriage Discourse on Social Media in Indonesia," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 2 (2023): 381–91.

10 See: Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Religion, Law, and Identity: Contending Authorities on Interfaith Marriage in Lombok, Indonesia," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 31, no. 2 (2020): 131–50; Bekele Melese Eshete et al., "The Role of Interfaith Marriage in Fostering Muslim and Christian Coexistence in Southern Wollo, Ethiopia," *Discover Global Society* 4, no. 1 (2026): 12; Yayuk Whindari et al., "Negotiating Islamic Law and Religious Tolerance in Mixed-Marriage Families in South Korea," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 17, no. 2 (2025): 574–98.

11 See: Muluneh Animut Tilahun et al., "Love Beyond Religious Conviction: The Challenges of Interreligious Marriage in South Wollo, Ethiopia," *Discover Global Society* 3, no. 1 (2025): 74; Muluneh Animut Tilahun et al., "Interreligious Marriage in Wollo, Ethiopia: Historical Factors Underpinning Its Development and Prevalence," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 11 (January 2025): 101611.

12 See: Jineesh Cyriac and P. M. Mathew, "Individual and Relational Outcomes of Inter-Religious Marriage: A Scoping Review," *Journal of Religion and Health* 65, no. 1 (2026): 247–89; Ryan N. Parsons et al., "Identity Development, Differentiation, Personal Authority, and Degree of Religiosity as Predictors of Interfaith Marital Satisfaction," *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 35, no. 4 (2007): 343–61.

13 See: Hannah K. Shoaf et al., "Strengths and Strategies in Interfaith Marriages," *Marriage & Family Review* 58, no. 8 (2022): 675–701; Liky Faizal et al., "Challenges in Interfaith Marriage: Literature Review of Faith Values and Their Implications for Families," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (2025): 965–88.

14 See: Muhammad Adil and Syahril Jamil, "Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Polemics and Perspectives of Religious Leaders and Community Organizations," *Religion and Human Rights* 18, no. 1 (2023): 31–53; Mifda Hilmiyah Hilmiyah et al., "Pernikahan Beda Agama pada Pemberitaan di Portal Berita Online (Studi pada Detik.com, Republika.co dan Kompas.com)," *KURIOSITAS: Media Komunikasi Sosial dan Keagamaan* 17, no. 1 (2024): 67–85.

attributing them to particular actors or institutions. Building on this argument, the study addresses three questions. First, how does online news coverage frame Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 and its implications for interfaith marriage? Second, which forms of authority are rendered visible, prioritized, or marginalized? Third, how do journalistic practices translate and simplify Islamic law, state law, judicial policy, and rights-based claims into legal narratives accessible to the public? In doing so, this article extends the study of Islamic law beyond the production of norms through *fiqh*, *fatwā*, legislation, and judicial decisions toward the circulation and mediation of legal authority in the digital public sphere.

## Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design with a socio-legal approach that integrates framing analysis and critical discourse analysis. It focuses on Indonesian online news coverage concerning the issuance and implications of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs. Since the Circular was issued on July 17, 2023, the observation period was set from July 18 to December 31, 2023, to capture both the immediate discursive responses to its issuance and the early development of news coverage regarding its implementation. Online media were selected as the empirical arena because digital journalism does not merely transmit legal information. It also selects sources, attributes claims, constructs headlines and leads, and translates legal complexity into concise formats that can circulate rapidly among the public.[15] Within this framework, the socio-legal approach enables the study to move beyond a doctrinal reading of the Circular by examining how this judicial policy is represented as it intersects with Islamic law, state law, religious authority, administrative practice, and rights-based claims. Critical discourse analysis is further employed to treat news not simply as a representation of legal reality but as a discursive practice that shapes the conditions under which language, institutions, power, and authority interact in the digital public sphere.

The research corpus consists of 33 online news articles published during the observation period (see Table 1). These articles were collected through Google News searches using keyword combinations directly related to Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 and interfaith marriage. They were then purposively selected based on their relevance to the research questions. An article was included in the corpus if it met three criteria: (1) it explicitly discussed Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 or its implications for interfaith marriage; (2) it contained at least one claim or source representing judicial, legal, religious, administrative, political, academic, or rights-based authority; and (3) it provided sufficient textual material for discourse analysis. Conversely, duplicate articles, very short news briefs lacking adequate analytical context, reports on interfaith marriage with no substantive connection to the Circular, and promotional or republished content without additional editorial input were excluded from the corpus. To assess the legal context and the accuracy of legal representations in the news coverage, the study also utilized legal documents and

[15] Eugenia Mitchelstein and Pablo J. Boczkowski, "Between Tradition and Change: A Review of Recent Research on Online News Production," *Journalism* 10, no. 5 (2009): 562–86.

academic literature as contextual sources. These included Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023, Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Law No. 23 of 2006 on Population Administration, court decisions cited in the news reports, and scholarly works relevant to the research objectives. These materials were used to verify the normative context and the accuracy of claims represented in the news but were not treated as part of the primary media corpus.

**Table 1**
**Online News Corpus on Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 and Interfaith Marriage**

| Code | Media Outlet | News Headline | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| DN1 | detikNews | *Official: Supreme Court Prohibits Judges from Authorizing Interfaith Marriages* | July 18, 2023 |
| SU2 | Suara.com | *Supreme Court Prohibits Judges from Granting Interfaith Marriage Applications; MUI: Those Entering Interfaith Marriages Violate the Law* | July 18, 2023 |
| AN3 | ANTARA | *MUI Welcomes Supreme Court Circular Prohibiting Interfaith Marriage* | July 18, 2023 |
| HO4 | Hukumonline | *For the Sake of Legal Uniformity, Supreme Court Prohibits Courts from Granting Interfaith Marriage Registration* | July 18, 2023 |
| SU5 | Suara.com | *Dear Interfaith Couples: Four Facts about the Interfaith Marriage Ban after the Supreme Court Issued an Official Circular* | July 19, 2023 |
| DN6 | detikNews | *UIN Jakarta Vice Rector: Supreme Court Circular Is Insufficient to End the Practice of Interfaith Marriage* | July 19, 2023 |
| RP7 | Republika | *Interfaith Marriages Cannot Be Registered by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Civil Registry without a Court Order* | July 19, 2023 |
| AN8 | ANTARA | *Member of Parliament Welcomes Supreme Court Circular Prohibiting Interfaith Marriage* | July 20, 2023 |
| KP9 | Kompas.com | *Judges Prohibited from Authorizing Interfaith Marriages; Supreme Court: Consistent with the Marriage Law* | July 20, 2023 |
| KP10 | Kompas.com | *Supreme Court Says Prohibition on Judges Granting Interfaith Marriage Applications Is Part of Its Supervisory Function* | July 20, 2023 |
| TT11 | Tirto.id | *Supreme Court Bans Interfaith Marriage; SETARA Institute: A Setback!* | July 20, 2023 |
| SU12 | Suara.com | *Judges Prohibited from Granting Interfaith Marriage Applications; SETARA Institute Calls for Supreme Court Circular No. 2/2023 to Be Revoked* | July 21, 2023 |
| KP13 | Kompas.com | *On the Interfaith Marriage Circular, Surabaya District Court Spokesperson: The Decision Remains with the Judge* | July 21, 2023 |
| KP14 | Kompas.com | *National Human Rights Commission to Review the Ban on Courts Granting Interfaith Marriage Applications* | July 21, 2023 |
| TT15 | Tirto.id | *Controversy over Supreme Court Policy Prohibiting Judges from Deciding Interfaith Marriage Cases* | July 21, 2023 |
| NU16 | NU Online | *Expert: Circular No. 2/2023 Clarifies the State's Position as the Institution Recognizing Marriage* | July 21, 2023 |
| SD17 | SINDOnews | *Circular No. 2 Issued; MUI: No More Efforts to Facilitate Interfaith Marriage* | July 21, 2023 |
| AN18 | ANTARA | *Vice President Asks Supreme Court to Issue Rules for Children Born of Interfaith Marriages* | July 23, 2023 |
| KP19 | Kompas.com | *On the Legal Certainty of Children Born of Interfaith Marriages, Ministry of Home Affairs Provides Clarification* | July 24, 2023 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| TT20 | Tirto.id | *Full Text of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Interfaith Marriage* | July 25, 2023 |
| HP21 | Harian Muria | *Circular Issued; Pati District Court Rejects Interfaith Marriage Application* | July 26, 2023 |
| KP22 | Kompas.com | *On the Interfaith Marriage Circular, Alissa Wahid: Do Not Impose One Rule on All Religions* | July 27, 2023 |
| KP23 | Kompas.com | *National Commission on Violence against Women Calls on Supreme Court to Revoke Circular Banning Interfaith Marriage* | July 28, 2023 |
| RP24 | Republika | *National Commission on Violence against Women: Interfaith Marriage Circular Violates the Constitution* | July 28, 2023 |
| DN25 | detikNews | *National Commission on Violence against Women Calls on Supreme Court to Revoke Circular Prohibiting Judges from Authorizing Interfaith Marriage* | July 31, 2023 |
| DN26 | detikNews | *After Supreme Court Circular, North Jakarta District Court Still Authorizes Interfaith Marriage* | August 28, 2023 |
| DN27 | detikNews | *North Jakarta District Court Authorizes Interfaith Marriage after the Circular; Here Is the Supreme Court's Response* | August 29, 2023 |
| HT28 | Harian Terbit | *North Jakarta District Court Accused of Defying Supreme Court Circular by Approving Interfaith Marriage* | August 29, 2023 |
| AN29 | ANTARA | *Supreme Court Asks Judges to Follow Circular No. 2/2023 on Interfaith Marriage* | August 29, 2023 |
| MU30 | MUI | *MUI Says Circular No. 2 of 2023 Reaffirms the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage* | September 13, 2023 |
| HO31 | Hukumonline | *STH Indonesia Jentera: Supreme Court Circular Is Not Legislation and Lacks Accountability* | September 20, 2023 |
| MU32 | MUI | *At the MPR Building, MUI Holds Public Outreach on Supreme Court Circular Guiding Judges in Interfaith Marriage Cases* | November 18, 2023 |
| DN33 | detikNews | *Chief Justice Discusses Two Laws Behind the Interfaith Marriage Controversy* | December 29, 2023 |

Source: Compiled from the 33 online news articles in the research corpus (2023).

The analysis was conducted in stages by combining Robert M. Entman's framing analysis with Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. In the first stage, Entman's framework was primarily used to examine how the Circular and its implications for interfaith marriage were framed through four functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.[16] In the second stage, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis deepened the interpretation of these patterns through three interrelated levels of analysis.[17] At the textual level, the analysis examined headlines, leads, lexical choices, modality, quotations, source attribution, and the representation of both the Circular and interfaith marriage. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis traced source selection and hierarchy, patterns of quotation, and intertextual relationships among news reports, the Circular, legislation, court decisions, *fatwā*, and statements by state and religious actors. At the level of social practice, the analysis examined how these patterns reproduced, negotiated, or challenged relations among judicial authority,

16 Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Polity, 1996), 62–100.
17 Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.

religious authority, state law, and rights-based claims within the context of Indonesian legal pluralism. The findings from these two analytical stages were then used to identify recurring patterns in the representation of legal and religious authority, including the tendency of news coverage to condense the complexity of legal norms and religious reasoning into claims attributed to particular institutions or figures. This process provides the analytical basis for examining authority compression as a mechanism through which legal complexity is mediated in online news.

## Interfaith Marriage from the Perspective of State Law

The regulation of interfaith marriage in Indonesian law reflects a complex normative configuration involving marital validity, religious norms, civil registration, and judicial authority. The basic framework is established in Article 2(1) of Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage (the Marriage Law), as amended by Law No. 16 of 2019, which states that a marriage is valid if conducted in accordance with the laws of the parties' respective religions and beliefs.[18] This provision indicates that state law does not define marital validity in entirely autonomous terms but instead links it to the religious norms applicable to the parties. This interpretation is reinforced by Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law, which prohibits marriage between two persons whose relationship is forbidden by their religion or other applicable regulations.[19] Thus, religion functions not merely as a matter of private belief but as a normatively relevant basis for determining marital validity. This arrangement places interfaith marriage at the intersection of state and religious authority, making the legal issue relational from the outset rather than purely doctrinal.[20]

This complexity becomes more apparent when marital validity is analytically distinguished from marriage registration. Law No. 23 of 2006 on Population Administration (the Population Administration Law), as amended by Law No. 24 of 2013, regulates the registration of marriages established by court order. The Elucidation to Article 35(a) states that "marriages established by a court" include marriages between persons of different religions.[21] In practice, this provision has served as one of the legal bases for interfaith couples seeking a court order to have their marriages recorded by the relevant population administration authorities. The legal issue, therefore, extends beyond whether a marriage is valid under religious law to whether, and through what mechanism, the state may accord administrative recognition to such a marriage.[22] This distinction is significant because it reveals two interrelated but non-identical legal domains: the norms that determine the validity of marriage and the administrative mechanisms through which marital status is formally recorded within the state legal system.

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18 "Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage," Article 2 paragraph (1). See: Zaidah Nur Rosidah et al., "The Government's Role in Interfaith Marriage Rights Protection: A Case Study of Adjustment and Social Integration," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 3, no. 2 (2023): 265–87.

19 "Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage," Article 8 letter f.

20 Syarif et al., "Negotiating Sacred Law," 379–401; Muchimah et al., "Legal Culture and the Dynamics of Religious Interaction in Ritual Practices among Interfaith Marriage," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 2 (2024): 333–48.

21 "Law No. 23 of 2006 on Population Administration," December 29, 2006, Article 35 letter a.

22 Sri Wahyuni et al., "The Registration Policy of Interfaith Marriage Overseas for Indonesian Citizen," *BESTUUR* 10, no. 1 (2022): 12–21.

The tension between these two domains is also evident in judicial practice. Before the issuance of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023, Indonesian courts exhibited considerable variation in their handling of applications for the registration of interfaith marriages. One frequently cited decision in this debate is Supreme Court Decision No. 1400 K/Pdt/1986, which has since been regarded in legal discourse as a precedent supporting the possibility of registering interfaith marriages through judicial proceedings.[23] At the district court level, divergent rulings similarly arose from differing interpretations of the relationship among the Marriage Law, the Population Administration Law, religious norms, and constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the right to form a family.[24] These variations demonstrate that the regulation of interfaith marriage under state law does not operate through a single, self-contained normative source but rather through the interaction of legislation, judicial interpretation, population administration, and religious norms. From a socio-legal perspective, this condition illustrates that normative plurality arises not only between state law and religious norms but also within the processes through which state institutions themselves interpret and apply the law.[25]

Within this legal framework, the Supreme Court issued Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs. The Circular instructs judges to adhere to Article 2(1) and Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law and directs courts not to grant applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions and beliefs.[26] In light of earlier variations in judicial decisions, the Circular can be understood as an institutional intervention by the Supreme Court aimed at promoting uniformity in the application of the law across the judiciary. Conceptually, however, it is important to distinguish between the normative scope of the Circular and its representation in the public sphere. The Circular does not create a new statutory prohibition on interfaith marriage equivalent in legal status to legislation; institutionally, it functions as a judicial policy instrument that provides guidance to judges in handling applications for interfaith marriage registration.[27] This distinction is significant because the relatively specific legal formulation

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23 Muhammad Ihsan Firdaus, "State Intervention on Interfaith Marriage through the Supreme Court's Circular in Indonesia: Human Rights Overview," *Human Rights in the Global South (HRGS)* 4, no. 1 (2025): 29–58; Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 2308174.

24 Ilda Hayati et al., "Reimagining the Legal Framework for Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: A Path Toward Inclusive Matrimonial Recognition," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 1 (2025): 307–22; Basar Dikuraisyin et al., "Reconstruction of Marriage Law: Judges' Progressive Reasoning Based on Maqāṣid in Addressing Divergent Interpretations in Indonesian Courts," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 2 (2024): 219–36.

25 Muchimah et al., "Cultural Pluralism and Islamic Legal Ethics: Reimagining Family Law for Interreligious Marriages in Banyumas," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 11, no. 1 (2026): 67–85; Achmad Yafik Mursyid et al., "Politics and Pluralism: Analyzing State Official Tafsir and Interfaith Discourse in Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (2024): 57–75; Mohd Norhusairi Mat Hussin et al., "Interfaith Marriage Among Muslims in Singapore," *Al-'Adalah* 22, no. 1 (2025): 1–28.

26 "Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs."

27 Sri Maryati et al., "The Dynamic Landscape of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Navigating The Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA) No. 02 of 2023 and Population Administration Law," *Daengku: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Innovation* 4, no. 3 (2024): 489–502; Kholifatun Nur Mustofa et al., "Religious

of the Circular is often condensed in news coverage into statements such as "the Supreme Court bans interfaith marriage." The shift from a provision governing judicial action in registration cases to a broader claim about the prohibition of interfaith marriage reveals a gap between the complexity of the legal issue and its representation in journalistic language.

## Framing of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 in Online News Coverage

Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 was not represented uniformly across the 33 online news articles analyzed. Drawing on Entman's four framing functions,[28] the analysis identifies four recurring frames: (1) legal certainty and uniformity, (2) legal-religious legitimacy, (3) rights and pluralism, and (4) inconsistency in judicial implementation. As summarized in Table 2, each frame organizes the legal issue differently by selecting and emphasizing particular aspects of the Circular and its implications for interfaith marriage. These differences shape what is constructed as the principal legal problem, which factors are positioned as causal, which normative standards are used for evaluation, and which forms of resolution are presented as appropriate. Online news coverage, therefore, does not merely transmit the content of the Circular; it organizes that content within particular interpretive structures.[29] These variations indicate that the meaning of the Circular in news coverage is not inherent in the legal text alone but is also constructed through practices of selection, salience, and attribution in news production.

First, the legal certainty and uniformity frame primarily constructs interfaith marriage as a problem of inconsistent judicial application rather than as a conflict between the freedom to marry and restrictions on interfaith marriage. This pattern was evident immediately following the issuance of the Circular. DN1 situated the policy within controversies surrounding court determinations and explained that the Circular was issued "to provide legal certainty and uniformity" in adjudicating applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions. A similar formulation appeared in AN3, where M. Asrorun Niam Sholeh, Chairman of the Fatwa Commission of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council), stated that the Circular was appropriate for providing "legal certainty in marriage," while HO4 placed the phrase "for the sake of legal uniformity" directly in its headline. Within Entman's framework, the problem definition is located in variations in judicial interpretation and court determinations, while the causal interpretation attributes the problem to inconsistent application of the law. The Circular is then positively evaluated as an instrument for restoring certainty and positioned as the recommended treatment for standardizing judicial guidance. However, this construction simplifies the normative complexity underlying divergent court determinations by recasting it as a problem of legal uncertainty requiring resolution. For example, DN1 also referred to district court determinations predating the Circular that relied on the Population Administration Law, Supreme Court Decision No. 1400 K/Pdt/1986, and the heterogeneity of Indonesian society

Authority and Family Law Reform in Indonesia: The Response and Influence of the Indonesian Ulema Council on Interfaith Marriage," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 23, no. 2 (2024): 383–93.

28 Entman, "Framing," 51–58.

29 Lucia Puspita Dhamayanti et al., "Online News: Media Framing on Indonesia's Capital City Relocation Policy," *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* 51, no. 6 (2024): 110–23.

as grounds for granting registration applications. SU5 likewise brought the Marriage Law, Islamic norms, and the views of religious organizations into the same explanatory field. What is represented as "inconsistency," therefore, is rooted in a plurality of normative sources and legal interpretations that do not necessarily point in the same direction. Scholarship on interfaith marriage in Indonesia similarly shows that tensions among marriage law, population administration, religious norms, and judicial interpretation have generated ambiguity and variation in judicial practice.[30] In the corpus analyzed here, this complexity is reorganized through the legal certainty and uniformity frame as a problem of inconsistent application to be resolved through the authority of the Supreme Court.

**Table 2**

**Framing of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 in Online News Coverage**

| Frame | Problem Definition | Causal Interpretation | Moral Evaluation | Treatment Recommendation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Legal certainty and uniformity | Variation in court determinations and judicial interpretations in interfaith marriage registration cases | Inconsistent application of marriage law and divergent judicial interpretations | Variations in court determinations are viewed as producing legal uncertainty and inconsistency | The Circular is positioned as a guideline for standardizing legal application and directing judges |
| Legal-religious legitimacy | Interfaith marriage is regarded as inconsistent with religious norms and the structure of national marriage law | Religion-based marital validity is linked to Article 2(1) and Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law | Restrictions are legitimized through the convergence of religious and state-law arguments | Strengthening implementation of the Circular and closing judicial avenues for the registration of interfaith marriages |
| Rights and pluralism | The Circular is viewed as restricting marital choice and citizens' rights in a plural society | Judicial restrictions are linked to insufficient recognition of diversity, freedom, and nondiscrimination | The Circular is challenged on the basis of human rights, diversity, justice, and constitutional principles | Revocation or reconsideration of the Circular and stronger protection of citizens' rights |
| Inconsistency in judicial implementation | Tension between Supreme Court guidance and post-Circular judicial practice | Divergent interpretations of the legal status of the Circular, judicial independence, and its relationship to legislation | The Circular is viewed as not fully resolving inconsistencies in legal application | Clarification of the Circular's legal status, harmonization of norms, or legislative resolution |

Source: Authors' analysis of the research corpus (2026).

[30] Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Nafisah, "Judging and Social Cohesion," 1–25; Hasna Lathifatul Alifa et al., "Interreligious Marriages in Indonesia: From Legal Disharmony to Legal Conflict," *Justicia Islamica* 20, no. 2 (2023): 193–214.

Second, the legal-religious legitimacy frame constructs the Circular through a convergence of religious norms and state law, thereby grounding restrictions on interfaith marriage in two normative registers simultaneously. Within this frame, the problem is defined as interfaith marriage being inconsistent with both religious norms and the structure of national marriage law, while the causal interpretation links religion-based marital validity to Article 2(1) and Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law. This pattern is evident in AN3, where the MUI Fatwa Commission distinguished marriage as a religious event from registration as a matter of state administration but then connected the two by arguing that a marriage considered invalid under Islam cannot be registered—a position summarized by the formulation, "Islam prohibits it, and the law forbids it." Similar legitimation was articulated not only by religious actors. AN8 quoted House of Representatives member, Guspardi Gaus, using the same formulation to argue that interfaith marriage is impermissible because "Islam prohibits it, and the law forbids it." The moral evaluation of the Circular is therefore constructed through a convergence of religious and legal arguments, while the recommended treatment favors stronger implementation of the Circular and closure of judicial avenues for interfaith marriage registration. This pattern continued in MU30, which represented the Circular as reaffirming the prohibition of interfaith marriage, and in MU32, which reported the dissemination of the Circular in November 2023. These findings indicate that religious and state authority are not represented as wholly separate domains; rather, they reinforce one another through interactions among religious norms, state institutions, and judicial authority. In the context of interfaith marriage, this interaction also involves state mediation of *fiqh* and institutional reinforcement of religious authority.[31] The present corpus extends this observation into the realm of media representation: the legal-religious legitimacy frame operates through a discursive convergence between religious and legal forms of legitimation.

Third, the rights and pluralism frame reframe the issue by shifting attention away from legal certainty and religion-state congruence toward the implications of the Circular for freedom, nondiscrimination, diversity, and citizens' constitutional rights. Within this structure, the problem definition centers on restrictions affecting marital choice and legal recognition for interfaith couples, while the causal interpretation links those restrictions to a judicial policy perceived as insufficiently responsive to Indonesia's plural social order. For example, TT11 quoted Halili Hasan, Executive Director of the SETARA Institute, describing the Circular as a "setback" that curtailed the judiciary's progressive potential to protect the rights of citizens from diverse backgrounds. Criticism also appeared in TT15 and SU12, where the Circular was associated with rights protection, diversity, and the constitutional character of the Pancasila state. Constitutional language was articulated even more explicitly in RP24, which quoted the National Commission on Violence against Women as arguing that the Circular disregarded constitutional obligations and citizens' legal rights, producing discrimination in the sphere of marriage. The moral evaluation within this frame, therefore, does not focus on the Circular's capacity to produce uniform legal

[31] Kamaluddin et al., "State-Mediated Fiqh and the Regulation of Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Southeast Asia," 149–72; Ulil Albab Al Aulia Alpaten and Risqi Khurdianto, "Governing Islamic Marriage Registration in Indonesia: State Legibility, Administrative Burden, and Legal Recognition," *Indonesian Journal of Sharia and Socio-Legal Studies* 2, no. 1 (2026): 64–87.

application but on its compatibility with human rights, diversity, nondiscrimination, and constitutional justice. Accordingly, the recommended treatment moves toward revocation, reconsideration, or correction of the Circular. This shift in evaluative standards alters the discursive position of the Supreme Court: from a provider of solutions in the legal certainty and uniformity frame to an object of critique in the rights and pluralism frame. Tensions among legal certainty, religious norms, and rights protection have likewise been central to scholarship on interfaith marriage and the Circular.[32] In this corpus, such differences demonstrate that evaluations of the Circular depend on the normative benchmark emphasized, whether uniform legal application or the protection of rights.

Fourth, inconsistency in the judicial implementation framework emerges as post-Circular developments reveal that Supreme Court guidance did not immediately eliminate interpretive variation at the lower-court level. Within this framework, the problem definition shifts toward the tension between the Supreme Court's institutional directives and adjudicative practices in lower courts. The causal interpretation is linked to divergent understandings of the Circular's legal status, the scope of judicial independence, and its relationship to existing legislation. An early indication appears in KP13, which reported a statement by the Surabaya District Court spokesperson that "the decision remains with the judge," suggesting discursively that judicial authority is not always represented as a linear relationship running from the Supreme Court to first-instance courts. This tension became more concrete when DN26 reported that the North Jakarta District Court continued to grant applications for interfaith marriage registration after the Circular had been issued. This development was followed by the Supreme Court's response in DN27 and by AN29's report that judges were again instructed to follow the Circular. The debate subsequently shifted from the substantive issue of interfaith marriage to the normative status of the instrument itself when HO31 highlighted the STH Indonesia Jentera's position that a Supreme Court Circular is not legislation and cannot override hierarchically superior legal provisions, including those under the Population Administration Law. By the end of the observation period, DN33 again situated the controversy over interfaith marriage within the tension between two statutes serving as competing legal references. The moral evaluation within this framework, therefore, questions the Circular's capacity to achieve uniform legal application, while the recommended treatment points toward clarifying its legal status, harmonizing norms, or pursuing legislative resolution. Questions concerning the status of the Circular, judicial independence, and regulatory harmonization have also featured prominently in scholarship published after its issuance.[33] In the corpus examined here, these issues are

[32] Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 2308174; Kadek Wiwik Indrayanti et al., "Questioning Human Rights, Looking for Justice: Analyzing the Impact of Supreme Court Circular Letter on Interfaith Marriages in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 385–416.

[33] Kemas Muhammad Gemilang et al., "Discussing the Phenomenon of the Appointment of Judges in District Courts Regarding Interfaith Marriages from a Legal Logic Perspective," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 November (2023): 307–24; Zainal Arifin et al., "Urgency Supreme Court Circular Letter Number 2 of 2023 in the Judicial Process of Interfaith Marriage Registration," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 5, no. 1 (2024): 137–78.

recontextualized as evidence that the Circular has not entirely foreclosed the possibility of divergent judicial interpretation.

These four frames demonstrate that news coverage of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 differs not only in source selection and perspective but also in the dimensions of legal reality constructed as the central issue. The legal certainty and uniformity frame treats divergent court determinations as a problem requiring standardization; the legal-religious legitimacy frame constructs convergence between religious norms and state law as the basis for justification; the rights and pluralism frame evaluates the Circular through the lenses of rights protection, diversity, and constitutional principles; and the inconsistency in judicial implementation frame focuses on the Circular's legal status, judicial interpretive space, and normative tensions. The online news corpus also reveals a temporal shift in salience rather than a complete replacement of one frame by another. In the initial phase of coverage, legal certainty and legal-religious legitimacy were foregrounded through responses from judicial, religious, and political actors; criticism from rights-based organizations subsequently expanded the interpretive field toward questions of rights and pluralism; and the North Jakarta District Court determination issued after the Circular increased the visibility of concerns regarding consistency in judicial implementation. These findings demonstrate that the same legal text can acquire different meanings when embedded in varying problem definitions, normative evaluations, and treatment recommendations. In this sense, news coverage becomes part of the mediatization of law, as legal norms enter media logics of selection, salience, attribution, and recontextualization.[34]

## Contestation and Hierarchies of Authority in Online News

News coverage following the issuance of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 did not provide equal visibility or discursive influence to all actors involved. The findings identify six recurring categories of authority: formal-judicial, first-instance judicial, normative-religious, political-administrative, rights-constitutional, and academic-scholarly. Differences among these categories were determined not merely by the frequency of their appearances but, more importantly, by the discursive roles they assumed in defining the issue, interpreting legal sources, legitimizing or criticizing the Circular, and articulating its legal consequences. The Supreme Court occupied a central position as the principal formal-judicial authority and the primary reference point for explaining the content, purpose, and implementation of the Circular. Religious actors primarily appeared as sources of normative legitimation; political-administrative actors functioned as policy supporters and managers of its consequences, while first-instance courts, rights-based organizations, and academic actors introduced alternative, corrective, or critical interpretations. These categories were not mutually exclusive, as individual actors could mobilize more than one repertoire of legitimacy.[35] This

[34] Anat Peleg and Bryna Bogoch, "Removing Justitia's Blindfold: The Mediatization of Law in Israel," *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 8 (2012): 961–78; Anat Peleg and Bryna Bogoch, "Mediatization, Legal Logic and the Coverage of Israeli Politicians on Trial," *Journalism Practice* 8, no. 3 (2014): 311–25; Daniel Joyce, "Human Rights and the Mediatization of International Law," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 23, no. 3 (2010): 507–27.

[35] Ahmad Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media: The Impact on the Legitimacy of Fatwas," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 23, no. 1 (2023): 1–24; Imron Rosidi et al., "The Fragmentation of Religious

pattern aligns with scholarship on the plurality of religious authority and the role of media in contesting legitimacy. Accordingly, the hierarchy constructed in news coverage reflects not only unequal visibility but also an unequal capacity to define the legal problem.

**Table 3**
**Configuration and Hierarchy of Authority in News Coverage of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023**

| Category of Authority | Principal Actors | Discursive Function | Repertoires of Legitimacy | Position in News Coverage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Formal-judicial | Supreme Court | Defines and reinforces the direction of judicial policy | Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023, Marriage Law, institutional authority and supervisory function, Pancasila | Defining authority |
| First-instance judicial | Surabaya District Court, Pati District Court, and North Jakarta District Court | Interprets and applies policy in concrete cases | Judicial independence, legal interpretation, case facts, legislation | Judicial interpretive authority |
| Normative-religious | MUI, NU, religious leaders and experts | Provides normative-religious justification | Islamic law, religious norms, Marriage Law, Pancasila | Legitimating authority |
| Political-administrative | House of Representatives, Vice President, and Ministry of Home Affairs | Supports policy and manages administrative consequences | Legislation, population administration, legal certainty, state policy | Supporting-administrative authority |
| Rights-constitutional | SETARA Institute, National Commission on Violence against Women, and National Human Rights Commission | Evaluates and challenges the legitimacy and implications of the Circular | Human rights, 1945 Constitution, Pancasila, diversity, nondiscrimination | Corrective authority |
| Academic-scholarly | UIN academics, STH Indonesia Jentera, and legal scholars | Examines coherence, hierarchy, and normative limits | Legal harmonization, hierarchy of norms, judicial independence, constitutional principles | Interpretive-critical authority |

Source: Authors' analysis of the research corpus (2026).

First, formal judicial authority places the Supreme Court at the center of the news configuration because the institution appears not only as the issuer of the Circular but also as the principal reference point for determining how the policy should be understood and

Authority in Provincial Towns in Indonesia: The Case of the MUI (Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council) in Pekanbaru and Pontianak," *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities* 24, no. 2 (2021): 185–203; Nibrosu Rohid et al., "Digital Activism in Contemporary Islamic Politics: A Critical Analysis of Social Media's Impact on Islamic Movements," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 208–33.

implemented. For example, DN1 constructs the Circular as an instrument for achieving "legal certainty and uniformity," thereby directly linking the Supreme Court's institutional authority to the need to standardize judicial practice. This position is reinforced in KP9 through the argument that the policy is consistent with the Marriage Law and in KP10 through emphasis on the Supreme Court's supervisory function. Its centrality remains evident even when the implementation of the Circular is contested. After the North Jakarta District Court granted an application for interfaith marriage registration, DN27 again positioned the Supreme Court as the authoritative interpretive source by emphasizing that the Circular "in essence prohibits courts from granting applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions." At the same time, the Supreme Court broadened its basis of legitimation when responding to human rights concerns by linking its position to Pancasila and the principle of belief in the One and Only God. This pattern indicates that the Supreme Court's authority derives not only from its place within the judicial hierarchy but also from its capacity to articulate judicial policy through multiple repertoires of legitimacy, ranging from positive law and institutional competence to Pancasila and human rights. The findings thus show that judicial authority over interfaith marriage operates within a field of legal pluralism in which religious norms, rights claims, and state law intersect.[36] Within this configuration, the Supreme Court functions as a defining authority, serving as the principal reference point for the meaning and implementation of the Circular.[37]

Second, first-instance judicial authorities demonstrate that the implementation of the Circular does not operate solely through a linear hierarchical relationship but also through interpretive processes at the level of case adjudication. KP13 reports the Surabaya District Court spokesperson's statement that "the decision remains with the judge," underscoring the persistence of judicial interpretive space despite the Supreme Court's issuance of guidance. This variation became more concrete in DN26, which reported that the North Jakarta District Court continued to grant applications for interfaith marriage registration after the Circular had been issued, subsequently prompting a response from the Supreme Court in DN27. By contrast, HP21 documents a different trajectory of implementation, with the Pati District Court rejecting an application after the Circular's issuance. These differences show that first-instance judges are not merely passive recipients of institutional policy but also active interpreters of the relationship among Supreme Court guidance, legislation, and the specific facts of individual cases. This finding aligns with scholarship demonstrating that the plurality of normative sources creates space for divergent judicial interpretation even amid institutional efforts to standardize legal application.[38] The configuration distinguishes the Supreme Court's hierarchical authority from the interpretive authority of first-instance courts, which apply legal norms and assess the operational limits of the Circular in specific

[36] Nafisah, "Judging and Social Cohesion," 1–25; Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 2308174.

[37] Arifin et al., "Urgency Supreme Court Circular Letter Number 2 of 2023 in the Judicial Process of Interfaith Marriage Registration," 137–78; Indrayanti et al., "Questioning Human Rights, Looking for Justice," 385–416.

[38] Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Nafisah, "Judging and Social Cohesion," 1–25.

cases. First-instance courts serve as judicial interpretive authorities—institutionally subordinate yet discursively significant in revealing variations in the Circular's application.[39]

Third, normative-religious authority gains visibility primarily through the MUI and other religious actors who provide normative justification for the Circular by linking Islamic law with state law. AN3 presents the MUI Fatwa Commission as not only welcoming the issuance of the Circular but also connecting it to the construction of marriage as a religious event, referencing Article 2(1) and Article 8(f) of the Marriage Law, including the formulation that "Islam prohibits it, and the law forbids it." SU2 reflects a similar pattern by situating MUI's response directly within the immediate context of the Circular's issuance, thereby positioning religious authority as a source of justification for judicial policy. This position continues in MU30, where MUI again affirms the prohibition of interfaith marriage and responds to arguments concerning human rights, equality, and democracy through references to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. These findings indicate that the legitimacy of religious actors rest not only on religious doctrine but also on their capacity to connect religious norms with positive law and state ideology. Consistent with previous studies, MUI's authority is shaped through institutional legitimacy, the production of *fatwā*, and its relationships with the state, society, and media.[40] In news coverage, MUI and other religious actors, therefore, function as legitimating authorities, providing normative-religious justification for the Circular without formally determining the policy itself.

Fourth, political-administrative authority primarily functions as a source of policy support and as a manager of the administrative consequences arising from the Circular's issuance. AN8 illustrates how political support for the Circular is constructed through a combination of positive-law arguments and religious norms, including the assertion that judges should follow the Supreme Court's directives. Meanwhile, RP7 and KP19 emphasize a more administrative dimension by shifting attention from marital validity to registration and the legal status of children. AN18 further expands on these consequences by presenting the status of children born of interfaith marriages as an issue requiring additional policy responses. This pattern reveals a form of institutional spillover: intervention in the judicial sphere generates subsequent issues in population administration and in protecting the legal status of family members. These findings align with scholarship showing that the regulation of interfaith marriage affects not only marital validity but also civil registration, family legal status, and the protection of children's rights.[41] In news coverage, political-administrative actors primarily support policy and manage its consequences rather than define the normative meaning of the Circular. Therefore, they can be understood as supporting administrative authority.

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[39] Kholifatun Nur Mustofa, "Judicial Attitudes and Interpretations toward Interfaith Marriage and Apostasy-Based Divorce: A Study of the Religious and District Courts of Salatiga," *Al-Hukama': The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law* 15, no. 2 (2025): 204–28.

[40] Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media," 1–24; Rosidi et al., "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority in Provincial Towns in Indonesia," 185–203.

[41] Hayati et al., "Reimagining the Legal Framework for Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 307–22; Abdul Aziz et al., "Supreme Court's Decision Regarding the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage and Its Relevance of Maqaṣid Al-Shari'ah," *Jurnal Hukum Islam* 22, no. 1 (2024): 213–48.

Fifth, constitutional authority grounded in rights is evident through the SETARA Institute, the National Commission on Violence against Women, and the National Human Rights Commission, which serve as sources of corrective evaluation of the Circular based on human rights, constitutional principles, diversity, and nondiscrimination. TT11 features the SETARA Institute describing the Circular as a "setback" and questioning its implications for the judiciary's progressive role in protecting the rights of citizens from diverse backgrounds. This corrective stance becomes more explicit in DN25, where the National Commission on Violence against Women calls for the Circular's revocation, characterizing it as discriminatory and inconsistent with the state's constitutional obligations. The criticism also highlights the social consequences for women and children when marriages cannot be registered. RP24 sharpens this position by framing criticism of the Circular in terms of the state's obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. This pattern aligns with scholarship that situates the Circular within a broader tension between uniformity in legal application and the protection of religious freedom, the right to form a family, and nondiscrimination.[42] The configuration reverses the evaluative relationship: the Supreme Court, previously positioned as a source of policy legitimacy, becomes an object of evaluation under constitutional and human rights norms. However, visibility does not automatically confer authority to determine policy direction. Rights-based actors thus function as corrective authorities, broadening the normative parameters through which the Circular is evaluated without possessing equivalent institutional power over its implementation.

Sixth, academic and scholarly authorities receive comparatively limited coverage but play a crucial argumentative role in examining the coherence, hierarchy, and normative limits of the Circular. For example, DN6 features Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie, Professor of Islamic Law at the UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, who offers a positive assessment of the Circular as reinforcing the Marriage Law while simultaneously arguing that interfaith marriage cannot be resolved through the Circular alone and instead requires harmonization among relevant legal norms. HO31 performs a similar critical function by presenting STH Indonesia Jentera's perspective, which questions the Circular's position within the legal system and its capacity to regulate judicial action. KP22 introduces another viewpoint through Alissa Wahid, National Coordinator of the Gusdurian Network Indonesia, who challenges the uniform application of a single normative framework across different religions. Although these sources do not necessarily share the same substantive position, news coverage assigns them a relatively similar discursive function: expanding the debate beyond a simple opposition between support and rejection toward issues of normative harmonization, legal hierarchy, religious plurality, and the limits of institutional authority. This pattern aligns with scholarship that situates interfaith marriage within tensions among normative plurality, rights, and judicial interpretation.[43] In this context, academic actors function as interpretive-critical authorities, examining the coherence and normative boundaries of the policy.

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42 Indrayanti et al., "Questioning Human Rights, Looking for Justice," 385–416; Bani Syarif Maula and Ilyya Muhsin, "Interfaith Marriage and the Religion–State Relationship: Debates between Human Rights Basis and Religious Precepts," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024): 791–820.

43 Indrayanti et al., "Questioning Human Rights, Looking for Justice," 385–416; Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Nor Salam et al., "Interfaith Marriage from the Perspective

These six categories demonstrate that contestation over authority in news coverage operates through an unequal distribution of discursive capacity and the mobilization of competing repertoires of legitimacy. Boundaries among forms of authority are permeable because positive law, Islamic norms, Pancasila, human rights, and constitutional principles can be invoked by different actors to support or challenge particular normative positions. This pattern aligns with legal pluralist perspectives, which understand law not as a single, closed normative order but as a field in which multiple sources of normativity and forms of authority interact, negotiate, and assume different positions within specific social contexts.[44] However, permeability does not eliminate hierarchy. In this corpus, the Supreme Court remains the discursive center of gravity because the content, purpose, implementation, and criticism of the Circular are largely articulated in relation to its judicial authority. These findings demonstrate that visibility is not equivalent to discursive authority, since the analytical issue is not merely who appears in the news, but who acquires the capacity to define the problem, establish interpretive parameters, and delimit the range of possible legal meanings.[45] This understanding also aligns with scholarship on media and religious authority, which shows that media constitute arenas where authority is not merely displayed but also contested and reconfigured through communicative practices. News coverage, therefore, constructs a hierarchy among different forms of authority while simultaneously providing an arena in which the complexity of norms and legitimacy is condensed into legal claims that are more concise and publicly recognizable.

## Legal Simplification and Authority Compression in Online News Coverage

News coverage of interfaith marriage following the issuance of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 demonstrates that journalistic practice not only determines which issues and sources gain visibility but also translates legal complexities and normative arguments into more concise and readily recognizable formulations. The findings identify five recurring patterns of simplification: reduction of the Circular's scope, compression of relationships among legal norms, compression of religious argumentation, compression of the plurality of authoritative positions, and reduction of judicial conflict to a question of compliance. These five patterns operate across various dimensions—the scope of the instrument, relationships among norms, religious reasoning, configurations of authoritative positions, and adjudicative practice—yet reveal a common tendency: the complexity of normative sources, interpretive processes, and legitimacy frameworks becomes less visible when conveyed through journalistic language. This tendency intersects with scholarship showing that framing operates through the selection and salience of particular aspects of reality, while media logic

of Rationality: Theocentrism in Islamic Law and Anthropocentrism in Human Rights Law," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 1 (2024): 179–96.

44 Ratno Lukito, "Sharī'ah and the Politics of Pluralism in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 14, no. 2 (2007): 265–84; Shane Chalmers, "Law's Pluralism: Getting to the Heart of the Rule of Law," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 17, no. 3 (2021): 577–97; Supriyadi and Nik Abdul Rahim Nik Abdul Ghani, "Negotiating Tradition and Modernity: The Practice of Prohibiting Marriage in the Month of Suro among Javanese Muslims in South Lampung," *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 4, no. 2 (2025): 114–28.

45 Taufiqur Rahman, "Media, Islamic Religious Authority and the Imagination of Ummat in Indonesia," *Komunikator* 7, no. 2 (2015): 75–86; Sonafist and Yuningsih, "Islamic Law, the State, and Human Rights," 381–91.

influences how institutions, legal processes, and authoritative claims are communicated in the public sphere.[46] This study extends that discussion by conceptualizing the process observed in the corpus as authority compression, a discursive mechanism whereby the complexity of normative sources, interpretive processes, and the foundations of legitimacy underlying a legal position are condensed through selective attribution to authoritative actors or institutions, thereby producing claims that are more concise and readily recognizable in Indonesian online news.

**Table 4**

**Typology of Legal Simplification and Authority Compression in News Coverage**

| Pattern | Form of Simplification | Complexity Compressed | Authority Foregrounded | Dimension Rendered Less Visible |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduction of the Circular's scope | Judicial guidance on registration applications is represented as a "ban on interfaith marriage" | Distinctions among marital validity, registration, and the scope of judicial guidance | Supreme Court | Limits of the Circular's authority and the validity-registration distinction |
| Compression of relationships among legal norms | The Circular is represented as a direct consequence of the Marriage Law | Relationships among the Marriage Law, Population Administration Law, the Circular, and judicial interpretation | Supreme Court and Marriage Law | Normative tensions, hierarchy of norms, and interpretive space |
| Compression of religious argumentation | Religious reasoning is reduced to the claim that religion prohibits interfaith marriage | Diversity of religious arguments and their relationship to state law | MUI and religious actors | Normative reasoning processes and plurality of religious interpretations |
| Compression of the plurality of authoritative positions | Complex contestation is rendered as support for versus opposition to the Circular | Differences among substantive, constitutional, institutional, administrative, and academic positions | Readily recognizable institutional actors | Intermediate positions, conditional support, and differences in the objects of criticism |
| Reduction of judicial conflict to a question of compliance | Implementation disputes are represented in terms of whether judges follow the Circular | Legal status of the Circular, judicial independence, legal interpretation, case facts, and normative conflicts | Supreme Court | Interpretive authority of first-instance judges and complexity of adjudication |

Source: Authors' analysis of the research corpus (2026).

[46] Entman, "Framing," 51–8; Bryna Bogoch and Anat Peleg, "19. Law in the Age of Media Logic," in *Mediatization of Communication*, ed. Knut Lundby (DE GRUYTER, 2014), 443–64; Muhammad Latif Fauzi et al., "The Digital Minbar: Repositioning Religious Authority and the Dynamics of Islamic Law in Contemporary Egypt's Virtual Landscape," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 5, no. 1 (2026): 178–209.

First, the scope of the Circular is reduced when an instrument specifically directed at judges adjudicating applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions and beliefs is translated into broader statements such as "the Supreme Court bans interfaith marriage" or "the Supreme Court prohibits judges from authorizing interfaith marriage." This pattern appears in DN1, SU2, HO4, KP9, KP10, TT11, and TT20. Legally, there is a significant distinction among marital validity, marriage registration, and judicial guidance concerning registration applications. Scholarship similarly shows that Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 operates within a normative framework involving the Marriage Law, population administration, judicial independence, and judicial interpretation, meaning its scope cannot simply be equated with the creation of a new substantive prohibition on interfaith marriage.[47] Yet, the phrase "ban on interfaith marriage" obscures these distinctions in news coverage. For example, AN29 provides a more precise formulation by explaining that the Circular "in essence prohibits courts from granting applications for the registration of marriages between persons of different religions." The shift from guidance concerning registration applications to a generalized narrative of prohibition reflects journalistic simplification rather than necessarily intentional distortion. Nevertheless, this simplification makes the Supreme Court appear more directly as the source of a substantive prohibition, while distinctions among marital validity, registration, and the function of judicial guidance become less visible. The compression of the norm's scope, therefore, simultaneously concentrates the attribution of authority in a single institution.

Second, the compression of relationships among legal norms occurs when the Circular is presented primarily as a direct consequence of the Marriage Law, resulting in a more complex normative configuration being simplified into a linear relationship among the statute, the Circular, and judicial action. For example, KP9 articulates the Supreme Court's policy through the phrase "consistent with the Marriage Law," while HO4 situates it within a narrative of "legal uniformity." However, a comprehensive reading of the corpus reveals a more layered configuration. RP7 addresses the registration mechanism within population administration, KP19 discusses legal certainty for children born of interfaith marriages, and AN18 demonstrates that the consequences of the Circular extend to issues concerning children's legal status. Normative tensions become even more explicit in HO31, which questions the Circular's place within the hierarchy of laws, while DN33 reports the Chief Justice's reference to "two laws" underlying the controversy over interfaith marriage. Scholarship similarly identifies tensions between the Marriage Law and the Population Administration Law, as well as ongoing space for judicial interpretation in interfaith marriage cases. Thus, a relationship that may appear in news coverage as the Marriage Law and the Circular providing the basis for judges to reject applications actually involves broader questions of marital validity, registration, hierarchy of legal instruments, administrative consequences, and judicial interpretation.[48] In this pattern, authority compression operates by condensing relationships among norms, making the Supreme Court and the Marriage Law

[47] Arifin et al., "Urgency Supreme Court Circular Letter Number 2 of 2023 in the Judicial Process of Interfaith Marriage Registration," 137–78.

[48] Maryati et al., "The Dynamic Landscape of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 489–502; Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 2308174.

more readily recognizable as the principal reference points, while other normative sources and interpretive pathways recede from view.

Third, compression of religious argumentation occurs when normative reasoning involving religion-based marital validity, Islamic law, religious authority, national marriage law, and religion-state relations is translated into more concise claims concerning the prohibition of interfaith marriage. AN3 provides a clear illustration: an argument addressing marriage as a religious event, its validity under religious law, and administrative registration is summarized as, "Islam prohibits it, and the law forbids it." Similarly, SD17 situates marital validity within the domain of religious authority, while NU16, MU30, and MU32 demonstrate that the religious legitimation of the Circular interacts with Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, positive law, and state authority. This complexity aligns with scholarship showing that religious positions on interfaith marriage in Indonesia are shaped by diverse interpretations of Islamic law and their interaction with state law and institutional authority.[49] Studies of *fatwā* and digital media also reveal that language and mediation processes influence how the legitimacy of religious authority is constructed and represented in the public sphere.[50] Consequently, religious positions in the corpus consist of multiple layers of argumentation: religious norms serve as criteria of validity, state law accords normative relevance to religious law, and judicial policy guides judges' actions in registration cases. Authority compression occurs when this layered configuration is condensed into normative claims readily attributed to particular religious actors, thereby rendering parts of Islamic legal reasoning and the plurality of interpretations less visible in news coverage.

Fourth, the compression of multiple authoritative positions occurs when the range of responses to the Circular is simplified into a binary opposition of support versus rejection, despite the corpus revealing substantive differences in what individual actors endorse, contest, or seek to amend. For example, TT11 and SU12 offer rights- and pluralism-based critiques, while KP23, RP24, and DN25 expand these critiques by addressing human rights, constitutional principles, nondiscrimination, and the implications for women and children. However, not all critical positions constitute outright rejection of the Circular's orientation. DN6 acknowledges the Circular's function but argues that "the Circular alone is not enough" because interfaith marriage requires harmonization among legal norms; HO31 questions the Circular's normative status and efficacy; and KP22 challenges the uniform application of a single normative framework across different religions. This complexity aligns with scholarship that situates interfaith marriage in Indonesia within a context of legal pluralism and contestation among religious norms, state law, judicial interpretation, and rights-based claims, while also demonstrating that religious authority itself is not monolithic.[51] The findings, therefore, reveal a spectrum that includes normative support, conditional support, critiques of the instrument's adequacy, challenges to its hierarchy and binding force, and human rights- and pluralism-based critiques. When these distinctions are compressed into

[49] Rosdiana Rosdiana et al., "Legitimacy on Inter-Faith Marriages: An Analysis of the Role of Religious Councils on the Legal Policy in Indonesia," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 19, no. 1 (2019): 81–96; Syarif et al., "Negotiating Sacred Law," 379–401.

[50] Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media," 1–24.

[51] Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Maloko et al., "Analyzing the Prohibition of Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," 2308174.

"pro-Circular" and "anti-Circular" categories, the specific positions that actors accept, reject, or seek to amend become obscured. In this pattern, authority compression functions by condensing differentiated authoritative positions, causing actors with distinct legitimacy claims and targets of criticism to be represented as relatively homogeneous groups.

Fifth, the reduction of judicial conflict to a question of compliance occurs when the relationship between the Supreme Court and first-instance judges is framed primarily in terms of whether judges adhere to the Circular, while the legal status of the Circular, judicial independence, legal interpretation, and the specific facts of individual cases receive less emphasis. DN1, KP9, and KP10 portray judges as recipients of Supreme Court guidance, whereas KP13 offers a different perspective by stating that "the decision remains with the judge." DN26 reports that the North Jakarta District Court continued to grant applications for interfaith marriage registration after the Circular was issued. This development subsequently prompted the Supreme Court's response in DN27 and a renewed emphasis in AN29 that judges should follow the Circular. In contrast, HP21 reports a court rejecting an application after the Circular's issuance, while HT28 characterizes a decision that departs from the Supreme Court's policy direction as an act of defiance toward the Circular. Scholarship indicates that variation in interfaith marriage decisions is related to ambiguities in the legal framework and divergent judicial interpretations, while the Circular was intended to reduce such disparities without eliminating questions concerning judges' interpretive roles in specific cases.[52] Accordingly, relationships involving institutional hierarchy, judicial independence, the legal status of the instrument, and legal interpretation are condensed in news coverage into a question of judicial compliance with Supreme Court guidance. In this pattern, authority compression positions the Supreme Court as the principal evaluative standard, while the interpretive authority of first-instance judges becomes most visible when their application diverges from the direction associated with the Circular. Thus, compression does not erase institutionally subordinate actors but situates their visibility within a discursive structure that continues to treat the Supreme Court as the primary point of comparison.

These five patterns demonstrate that authority compression is not merely synonymous with framing, linguistic simplification, or source selection. Rather, it constitutes a discursive mechanism through which normative complexity is condensed by attributing it to particular authorities. This mechanism operates by narrowing the Circular's scope to a "ban on interfaith marriage," compressing relationships among legal norms into a direct connection between the Marriage Law and the Circular, simplifying religious reasoning into normative claims attributed to religious actors, grouping plural authoritative positions into categories of support and opposition, and reducing judicial tensions to questions of compliance with the Supreme Court. These patterns reveal a progression from the complexity of normative sources, through journalistic selection and attribution of authority, toward compressed legal claims. This interpretation aligns with scholarship demonstrating that media logic can reshape how legal institutions and processes are communicated and that, in digital Islamic contexts, language and mediation help structure the visibility and legitimacy of religious

[52] Nafisah, "Judging and Social Cohesion," 1–25; Hasan Bisri, "The Legal Framework for Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Examining Legal Discrepancies and Court Decisions," *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum* 57, no. 2 (2024): 201–29.

authority.[53] However, the present findings go further by showing that this process not only simplifies information but also produces an unequal distribution of authoritative visibility. The Supreme Court becomes more readily recognizable as the source of policy and the principal evaluative standard, while religious actors become more closely associated with normative legitimation. Meanwhile, the complexity of relationships among norms, variation in judicial interpretation, and differentiation among critical positions become comparatively less visible. These findings do not establish changes in audience understanding or the legal validity of any norm; rather, they demonstrate that journalistic practice renders some forms of authority more visible, more readily recognizable, and more available as interpretive reference points than others. In this sense, authority compression links legal simplification to the reconfiguration of authoritative visibility and provides an empirical basis for understanding the broader configuration of mediated legal pluralism.

## Mediated Legal Pluralism: Reconfiguring Legal Authority in the Digital Public Sphere

The findings reveal that news coverage of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 serves as a site of mediation where normative plurality and competing forms of authority receive unequal levels of visibility and discursive positioning. The four identified frames—legal certainty and uniformity, legal-religious legitimacy, rights and pluralism, and inconsistency in judicial implementation—demonstrate that the meaning of the Circular is shaped by diverse normative sources and evaluative standards. The legal certainty frame centers on the Supreme Court and the Marriage Law; the legal-religious legitimacy frame emphasizes religious norms and religious authority; the rights and pluralism frame invoke constitutional principles, human rights, diversity, and nondiscrimination; and the inconsistency in judicial implementation frame raises questions about the legal status of the Circular, judicial independence, and the relationships among norms. This configuration intersects with scholarship that situates interfaith marriage in Indonesia within a field of legal pluralism and contested authority, where religious norms, state law, and institutional interpretation interact.[54] However, the present findings reveal an additional dimension: this pluralism is not merely the coexistence of normative orders but a form of plurality whose public visibility is mediated unevenly. This perspective also resonates with mediatization scholarship, which shows that media help shape the communicative conditions and visibility of religious authority.[55] The article conceptualizes this configuration as mediated legal pluralism, a socio-legal condition in which competing normative orders acquire differentiated visibility and discursive positions through journalistic mediation. Thus, media do not constitute a new source of law or determine the validity of norms; rather, they function as arenas that communicatively organize the relative visibility and positioning of competing norms and authorities in the digital public sphere.

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53 Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media," 1–24; Rahman, "Media, Islamic Religious Authority and the Imagination of Ummat in Indonesia," 75–86.

54 Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Nasir, "Religion, Law, and Identity," 131–50.

55 Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Religion," 119–35; Stig Hjarvard, "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion," *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (2016): 8–17.

This configuration demonstrates that formal authority, normative legitimacy, and discursive capacity do not necessarily coincide. The Supreme Court occupies a central position as the principal reference point for defining the purpose and implementation of the Circular. Yet, this centrality coexists with other forms of authority that mobilize different repertoires of legitimacy. Religious actors connect religious norms with positive law; political-administrative actors invoke legality, legal certainty, and administrative consequences; rights-based organizations mobilize constitutional principles, human rights, diversity, and nondiscrimination; while first-instance judges and academic actors raise questions of interpretation, normative hierarchy, judicial independence, and the adequacy of legal instruments. This configuration aligns with scholarship showing that interfaith marriage in Indonesia constitutes a field of contestation among institutional, religious, legal, and individual forms of agency, while religious authority itself remains plural and potentially fragmented.[56] The discursive hierarchy constructed in news coverage, therefore, does not mirror the formal institutional hierarchy. Boundaries among forms of authority are also permeable: religious actors invoke Pancasila and state law, political actors connect legality with religious norms, and the Supreme Court responds to human rights discourse through Pancasila and the principle of belief in the One and Only God. Such contestation cannot be adequately reduced to a binary opposition between religion and the state or between Islam and human rights. What emerges instead is a circulation of repertoires of legitimacy, in which actors with different institutional bases mobilize overlapping normative sources to justify, interpret, or challenge legal claims. The analysis of authority thus shifts from asking who formally possesses legal competence to examining who is rendered visible as authoritative, which sources of legitimacy are mobilized, and which discursive positions are available to different actors.

The relationship between normative plurality and this configuration of authority can be understood through the mechanism conceptualized in this study as authority compression. The five identified patterns—the reduction of the Circular's scope, the compression of relationships among norms, the compression of religious argumentation, the compression of the plurality of authoritative positions, and the reduction of judicial conflict to a question of compliance—demonstrate how normative complexity is condensed through selection and attribution to specific actors or institutions. This process occurs within a field of legal pluralism where state law, religious norms, and institutional interpretations intersect,[57] aligning with scholarship that shows mediation can reshape the visibility and legitimacy of religious authority.[58] For example, the transformation of provisions governing the granting of marriage registration applications into a broader narrative of a "ban on interfaith marriage" makes the Supreme Court more readily identifiable as the source of the prohibition, even though the underlying normative configuration is considerably more complex. Similarly, the formulation "Islam prohibits it, and the law forbids it" condenses *fiqh*

56 Nasir, "Religion, Law, and Identity," 131–50; Rosidi et al., "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority in Provincial Towns in Indonesia," 185–203.

57 Lukito, "The Enigma of Legal Pluralism in Indonesian Islam," 179–91; Koschorke, "Legal Pluralism in Indonesia," 199–229.

58 Hjarvard, "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion," 8–17; Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media," 1–24.

reasoning and its relationship to state law into a claim attributed to religious authority. A comparable mechanism operates when constitutional, institutional, and human rights-based critiques are compressed into an "oppositional" position, or when judicial independence and interpretation are primarily represented as questions of compliance with the Circular. In this context, framing explains how an issue is interpretively organized, while authority compression describes how normative complexity is condensed by attributing authority.

These findings position the study at the intersection of legal pluralism and the mediation of religious authority. Scholarship on the mediatization of religion has demonstrated that media do not merely serve as neutral channels but actively shape the communicative conditions, representation, and visibility of religious authority.[59] In the Indonesian Islamic context, technological mediation has similarly been linked to changing patterns of message circulation and shifts in the positions of religious actors, while digital media have introduced new challenges to institutional religious legitimacy.[60] The present findings engage with this literature but extend it in two key directions. First, mediation in the case of the Circular simultaneously brings judicial, religious, political-administrative, academic-scholarly, and rights-based authorities into a single normative field. Second, authority compression shows that mediation does not stop at distributing visibility; it also condenses the complexity of normative reasoning through institutional attribution, allowing actors' identities to function as discursive shorthand for more elaborate legal arguments. These findings advance scholarship on the mediation of *fatwā* and digital authority by demonstrating that questions of legitimacy become more complex when *fiqh* reasoning interacts with state law, judicial policy, population administration, and constitutional claims. The study thus moves beyond the general thesis of mediated religious authority toward a more specific account of how journalistic mediation reconfigures the visibility of, and relationships among, multiple forms of authority within a field of normative pluralism.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that online news coverage of Supreme Court Circular No. 2 of 2023 on Guidelines for Judges in Adjudicating Applications for the Registration of Marriages Between Persons of Different Religions and Beliefs does more than merely represent the controversy surrounding interfaith marriage. It communicatively organizes the visibility of competing norms and authorities within the digital public sphere. The four dominant frames—legal certainty and uniformity, legal-religious legitimacy, rights and pluralism, and inconsistency in judicial implementation—reveal that the meaning of the Circular is constructed through various normative parameters. Within this configuration, the Supreme Court emerges as the central judicial reference point, while religious actors, political-administrative figures, rights-based organizations, first-instance judges, and academic actors acquire differing degrees of discursive capacity to legitimize, interpret, or challenge the policy.

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59 Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Religion," 119–35; Hjarvard, "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion," 8–17.

60 Moch Fakhruroji, "Mediatization of Religion in 'Texting Culture': Self-Help Religion and the Shifting of Religious Authority," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 231–54; Suaedy et al., "Language, Authority, and Digital Media," 1–24.

This asymmetry operates not only through framing but also through authority compression, whereby the complexity of normative sources, interpretive processes, and repertoires of legitimacy is condensed into claims attributed to readily recognizable actors or institutions. These findings support the conceptualization of mediated legal pluralism as a socio-legal configuration in which competing normative orders acquire unequal levels of visibility and discursive positioning through journalistic mediation. Therefore, the media do not generate new forms of legal validity; rather, they communicatively reconfigure the visibility of, and relationships among, existing forms of legal authority.

The article contributes to the scholarship on Islamic law and Islamic family law by moving beyond the production and validity of norms to explore the circulation, translation, and mediation of legal norms and authority. In the context of interfaith marriage, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *fatwā* (legal opinion), legislation, judicial policy, and constitutional claims interact not only within normative and institutional domains but also undergo translation as they enter public discourse. Media should, therefore, be understood not as a new normative source, but as a social context that shapes the visibility and communicative power of legal reasoning and authority. In this regard, mediated legal pluralism offers a framework for connecting the normative, institutional, and mediational dimensions of Islamic legal analysis, while authority compression explains one mechanism linking these dimensions. Since this study is limited to textual analysis of online news coverage following the issuance of the Circular, its findings cannot determine how editorial decisions were made in newsrooms or how audiences interpreted the coverage. Future research should thus combine textual analysis with journalist interviews, newsroom ethnography, audience studies, and cross-platform comparisons to examine how mediated legal pluralism is produced, negotiated, and received across a broader digital media ecology.

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