

Original Article

Across Boundaries: Household Harmony Among Interfaith Filipino Families in Rizal, Laguna

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Article History:

Date received: May 21, 2026

Date revised: July 13, 2026

Date accepted: July 23, 2026

Recommended citation:

Isleta, T.A., Banaag, D., Vitales, A.K., Matres, R., Alvero, J.C., & Perez, A. (2026). Across boundaries: Household harmony among interfaith Filipino families in Rizal, Laguna. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 4(8), 168-184.
<https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2026.280>

Abstract. Religious diversity within Filipino households creates unique relational dynamics as family members negotiate differences in beliefs, practices, and identities while maintaining everyday family harmony. Despite the growing visibility of interfaith families in the Philippines, limited research has examined how entire households collectively manage religious differences within shared domestic spaces. Guided by the Dual Concern Model and informed by Sikolohiyang Pilipino, this study explored how interfaith Filipino families negotiate religious differences and sustain household harmony. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven (11) participants from five interfaith families residing in Rizal, Laguna. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed four major themes: Respect as Cultural Mechanism, Invisible Tensions Beneath Surface Harmony, Adaptive Household Strategies for Coexistence, and Faith as Personal Anchor and Conflict Trigger. Participants commonly managed religious differences through accommodating, compromising, collaborating, and selective avoidance strategies, expressed through negotiated household boundaries, emotional regulation, proactive communication, selective participation, non-interference, and reciprocal caregiving. Although subtle tensions emerged through ritual exclusion, emotional distance, teasing, silence, and differences in religious commitment, participants rarely described overtly competitive conflict responses. Rather than forcing beliefs or engaging in direct confrontation, participants generally prioritized preserving family relationships while maintaining personal religious convictions. From the perspective of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the limited presence of the competing style may reflect Filipino relational values such as *kapwa*, *pakikisama*, *paggalang*, and family obligation, which emphasize social harmony, relational sensitivity, and collective cohesion over direct assertion of personal beliefs. The findings suggest that harmony within interfaith households is sustained not by eliminating religious differences, but through culturally grounded relational practices, continuous adjustment, and shared efforts to preserve unity within everyday family life.

Keywords: *Conflict management styles; Dual Concern Model; Filipino cultural values; Household harmony; Interfaith families.*

Religion remains one of the most enduring cultural forces in the Philippines, shaping daily routines, rites of passage, cultural practices, and moral socialization (Li, 2021). While Catholicism remains the dominant religious affiliation in the country, the Philippine religious landscape has gradually become more diverse, with multiple Christian denominations and other religious traditions present across communities. This growing diversity is increasingly reflected within Filipino households, where family members may hold different religious affiliations while sharing the same domestic space. National census data further illustrate this pluralism, with Roman Catholicism remaining the largest affiliation alongside significant populations of Muslims, Iglesia ni Cristo members, Protestant groups, and other Christian denominations (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). In this context, households serve as key sites where religious differences are encountered and negotiated in everyday life.

Despite the presence of interfaith families in everyday Filipino life, existing literature has largely focused on interfaith couples rather than the broader household system (Stanford et al., 2025). Similarly, Muñoz et al. (2020) found that interfaith married couples commonly experience challenges related to religious commitment, family relationships, decision-making, and their children's religious identification. Likewise, Laili and Kusuma (2021) examined conflict management strategies among families of interfaith marriages in making religious decisions for their children. While these studies provide valuable insights into the experiences and coping strategies of interfaith families, they primarily focus on couple relationships and religious decision-making for children rather than on how interfaith Filipino families collectively negotiate religious differences and sustain household harmony in everyday domestic life. As a result, limited attention has been given to this phenomenon, particularly within the Philippine context.

Examining how harmony is constructed within interfaith households provides insight into broader processes of coexistence in religiously diverse societies. This highlights the need for context-specific inquiry that captures the lived experiences of families navigating religious diversity within shared domestic spaces. To address this gap, this study employs a phenomenological approach guided by the Dual Concern Model to explore how interfaith Filipino families in the Municipality of Rizal, Laguna negotiate religious differences and maintain household harmony.

The study contributes to a deeper understanding of interfaith family dynamics in the Philippine context while advancing Filipino Psychology (*Sikolohiyang Pilipino*) by highlighting how core household values—respect, *pakikisama*, and *pagkakaunawaan*—guide everyday interactions and decision-making in interfaith Filipino families. By situating religious negotiation within these shared cultural values, the study highlights how everyday family practices foster peaceful and inclusive relationships, contributing to broader efforts toward social cohesion in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine the lived experiences of Filipino families in interfaith households. Phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences by examining their behaviors, emotions, and perceptions in everyday life (Ayton, Tsindos, & Berkovic, 2023). This approach was appropriate for the study as it enabled a deeper understanding of how members of interfaith families navigate religious differences, manage conflicts, and maintain harmony within the household.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of five interfaith families comprising a total of eleven (11) individuals residing in the Municipality of Rizal, Laguna. The locale was selected because the municipality has diverse religious institutions, facilitating the identification of families with differing religious affiliations. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) ability to share experiences related to religious practices and family interactions; (2) the presence of at least two household members with different religious affiliations; and (3) cohabitation within the same household for at least one year. For each family, a minimum of two members participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews to capture both individual perspectives and shared family experiences regarding interfaith dynamics and household harmony.

Research Instrument

A researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide was used to gather qualitative data relevant to the study's objectives. The instrument consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding interfaith practices, family interactions, and conflict management within interfaith households. The interview guide was structured into eight sections. Section 1 focused on the participants' backgrounds, including family composition, household members' religious affiliations, and reasons for adherence to their respective religions. Sections 2 to 6 examined five conflict management styles grounded in the Dual Concern Model, exploring how family members respond to and manage religiously related disagreements within the household. Section 7 focused on household harmony, particularly the factors and practices that contribute to maintaining cohesion and stability within interfaith family settings. Section 8 centered on reflective and aspirational questions, allowing participants to express personal insights, meaning-making, and future expectations regarding their interfaith family experiences.

To ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness, the interview guide underwent face and content validation by four experts: two language specialists and two experts in psychology and psychometrics. Feedback from the validators was incorporated to refine the wording, structure, and sequencing of questions. A trial interview was subsequently conducted with an interfaith family to assess the instrument's clarity, flow, and effectiveness. The semi-structured format also allowed flexibility for probing and follow-up questions, enabling richer and more nuanced responses from participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from the Office of the Mayor of the Municipality of Rizal, Laguna. Following approval, coordination was undertaken to identify and select interfaith families who met the study's inclusion criteria. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were briefed on the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and ethical considerations, including confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Data collection was conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participant availability, and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Data collection was completed by the third week of November 2025.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze and interpret the qualitative data gathered in the study. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using TurboScribe and repeatedly reviewed by the researchers to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated from meaningful segments of the transcripts, allowing patterns to emerge naturally from participants' narratives. These codes were then organized into categories based on similarities in meaning and relationships observed across responses.

The categories were subsequently reviewed and refined into coherent themes that reflected the central patterns in the data. To enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the analytic process, the coding framework and thematic interpretations underwent expert review and consultation to ensure consistency, accuracy, and alignment with the research objectives. Recommendations from the expert reviewer were incorporated into the refinement of the themes prior to the final interpretation of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the conduct of the study. Prior to participation, the informed consent process was thoroughly explained to each participant to ensure voluntary participation and full understanding of the study procedures. Participants were assured that all information gathered would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. To protect participants' privacy, identifying information was removed from all records and transcripts. All collected data, including audio recordings and interview transcripts, were securely stored and will be permanently deleted at the end of the academic year. Furthermore, the handling and protection of all data adhered to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussion

Respect as Cultural Mechanism

Respect as a Cultural Mechanism emerged as a foundational value that shaped how participants understood and navigated religious diversity within their families. Rather than requiring agreement in beliefs, participants

described respect as a culturally grounded orientation that emphasized reciprocity, personal autonomy, and emotional acceptance. These practices allowed family members to preserve harmonious relationships while recognizing differences in religious identity. Across participants' narratives, respect functioned less as passive tolerance and more as an active interpersonal value that guided everyday family interactions.

One important expression of respect was mutual yielding (*bigayan*), in which family members consciously adjusted to one another to prevent disagreements from escalating into conflict. Participants described *bigayan* as a reciprocal process of compromise in which maintaining household peace became more important than proving one's religious position. Rather than persuading others to change their beliefs, participants emphasized giving way, adjusting expectations, and sharing responsibility for preserving family harmony.

As one of the participants narrated:

"...there are not really many arguments between us as long as we learn to give and take... 'we do not want conflict, so we just practice mutual yielding instead. That is really the main reason because we no longer want to argue about those things.'"

Another participant shared:

"Just mutual yielding. Mutual yielding and respect as well."

Also, a participant described:

"Actually, we just practice mutual yielding. Whatever her faith is, it is okay because before, we also lived with someone from a different religion and there was never any problem."

These responses suggest that *bigayan* is an intentional practice of giving way and adjusting to one another to maintain peace and respect within the family. Rather than trying to persuade others to change their beliefs, participants accepted religious differences and prioritized harmonious relationships over religious disagreements. The findings show that *bigayan* is a culturally grounded expression of mutual respect that helps families maintain harmony despite differences in faith.

The findings further suggest that harmony within interfaith households is actively maintained through compromise, tolerance, and relational adjustment. Participants' experiences are consistent with previous studies identifying negotiation, communicative labor, and selective avoidance as important approaches to preserving peace and stability in interfaith families (Dorias et al., 2025). Similarly, Agung et al. (2024) emphasized that shared cultural values and community support systems reinforce cooperation and tolerance among families of different faiths.

Participants also emphasized respect for religious autonomy, demonstrating that maintaining harmony was supported by recognizing each family member's right to practice their own faith without coercion or interference. Rather than attempting to persuade or convert one another, participants described allowing individual choice, respecting personal boundaries, and acknowledging that religious belief remained a personal matter.

One participant explained:

"There was really no forcing because forcing is prohibited in the Jehovah's Witnesses... They did not force me... I told them not to include me in their religion so that we would not argue."

Another participant shared:

"It seems like we each just have our own things we want to do. If they do not want to believe in our beliefs, we do not force others, and I also do not force them not to..."

Also, a participant described:

"We do not force our beliefs on them – they have the freedom to choose. Whatever they say... I do not contradict it because it's their beliefs... I will still let them be."

These responses suggest that the participants maintained harmony by recognizing religious belief as an individual choice rather than a collective obligation. Respect was expressed through non-interference, acceptance of differing convictions, and clear acknowledgment of personal boundaries, allowing religious diversity to coexist without

requiring uniformity of belief.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith couples often maintain harmony through negotiated boundaries and selective engagement (Stanford et al., 2025). Participants' references to the idea that "forcing is prohibited" also illustrate how non-coercion may function as an important relational principle within the household. Similarly, Shoaf et al. (2022) noted that negotiated participation and reduced proselytizing may support tolerance and coexistence within interfaith families. Consistent with Anisa (2024), the findings suggest that non-imposition may help reduce doctrinal tension and preserve emotional stability.

Beyond respecting individual beliefs, participants also described emotional acceptance and validation as important expressions of respect. Religious differences did not diminish family affection or belonging; instead, participants emphasized continuing to support, care for, and accept one another regardless of religious affiliation.

One participant shared:

"Because when they see that you support them, they will also support you. It is okay with us even if we have different beliefs; it is all about respect, just mutual respect..."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"...we just respect each other here... respect the beliefs and perspectives of others. ...I respect what he wants. No one here is being stepped on... We know how to respect. I do not mock him..."

Another participant stated:

"What matters to us is the love among family members. Nothing has changed in our situation. Maybe also our bond as a family, our bonding together even if we have different religions, our love for one another will still remain."

These responses suggest that respect functioned as an active relational practice grounded in emotional support, acceptance, and the intentional preservation of family relationships. Participants described reciprocal support and acknowledgment of one another's beliefs as important in maintaining harmony. Supporting one another's choices reinforced acceptance and strengthened family relationships despite religious differences.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that negotiated routines, compromise, and openness contribute to stability within interfaith households (Gogoi, 2025). Similarly, Maghinay et al. (2024) noted that emotional support and openness may improve interactional dynamics and reduce relational strain within families. The present findings additionally highlight the role of validation and non-ridicule in sustaining harmonious relationships despite religious differences. These patterns also align with Del Castillo's (2023) discussion of mutual support and cooperation within communities, suggesting that broader cultural values of solidarity may reinforce respectful and supportive family relationships.

In parallel, boundary-based respect highlights the recognition of personal and spiritual boundaries within the household. By maintaining distinctions in beliefs and practices, families prevent conflict, foster autonomy, and sustain peaceful coexistence. These responses depict boundary-based respect as a practice in which individual religious identity is affirmed while interpersonal limits are clearly recognized and honored. Participants framed belief as a personal domain.

One participant stated:

"Whatever I believe in, that is my religion... It is like we each have our own belief; if I do not want to, then I do not want to. It is the same with father, but when you say no to him, that is already okay for him... As long as we know each other's boundaries, it is easy for us to adjust."

Another participant explained:

"That is the belief I have that others cannot change, the belief I grew up with. Because each person has their own belief... My belief is that every individual, or every person, can choose the religion they want to belong to."

Another participant added:

"We really do not have many rules because we each have our own beliefs."

These responses suggest that boundary-based respect operates as a pragmatic approach to managing religious diversity by affirming individual autonomy while maintaining clear interpersonal limits. Participants conceptualize religious belief as a personal domain that should not be altered or contested by others, allowing family members to coexist without requiring agreement or shared religious identity. By recognizing and honoring boundaries, households can adjust quickly to differences, minimize sources of tension, and normalize religious plurality as part of everyday family life. Respect, in this sense, is enacted through restraint and acknowledgment of personal choice rather than through persuasion or negotiation of beliefs.

These findings are consistent with Abcede et al. (2017), who suggested that open-mindedness, respect for family members, and flexible child-rearing practices may help reduce conflict and support harmony within interfaith families. Rather than seeking complete religious agreement, participants appeared to maintain harmony by recognizing individual differences and limiting interference in one another's beliefs and practices. This pattern aligns with McPhail's (2019) observation that reduced shared religious socialization within religiously diverse households may influence the religiosity of children over time. The findings also support Kelley's (2018) argument that religion itself is not inherently unifying or divisive; instead, its effects on family harmony depend largely on how beliefs are practiced and negotiated within family relationships.

Collectively, the findings suggest that respect functioned as the primary cultural mechanism through which participants managed religious diversity within their families. Rather than requiring shared religious beliefs, participants maintained harmonious relationships through mutual yielding (*bigayan*), respect for religious autonomy, emotional acceptance, and recognition of personal boundaries. These practices allowed family members to preserve both individual religious identities and family cohesion despite differences in faith.

Viewed through the Dual Concern Model, these patterns primarily reflect accommodating and compromising conflict management styles. Participants demonstrated a high concern for maintaining family relationships while simultaneously recognizing each individual's right to retain personal religious convictions. Instead of resolving religious differences through persuasion or confrontation, they relied on reciprocal adjustment, respect for autonomy, and mutual acceptance to sustain harmonious family relationships.

From the perspective of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, these findings may be understood through the concept of *pakikipagkapwa*, which emphasizes recognizing the dignity, shared humanity, and relational connection of others despite individual differences (Cañete & Del Castillo, 2022). Participants demonstrated respect by allowing family members to retain their own religious beliefs, offering emotional support, and maintaining harmonious relationships without requiring religious conformity. In this context, respect functioned as an active cultural value that enabled family cohesion while honoring religious diversity.

Invisible Tensions Beneath Surface Harmony

Invisible Tensions Beneath Surface Harmony emerged as a recurring pattern in participants' experiences of living in interfaith households. Although participants generally described their families as peaceful, they also revealed subtle forms of strain that persisted within everyday family life. These tensions were expressed through ritual exclusion, emotional isolation, subtle ridicule, and religiously framed family disagreements. Across participants' narratives, visible harmony often coexisted with underlying discomfort, suggesting that peaceful family relationships did not necessarily indicate the absence of tension.

One manifestation of these underlying tensions was ritual exclusion, in which participants experienced limited participation in family rituals, celebrations, and shared worship. Religious commitments sometimes restricted involvement in these practices, making religious differences more visible within everyday family life.

One participant explained:

"We cannot attend... we practice not participating in any celebration related to Christmas... what happens is that my spouse ends up going alone... and it makes him look like he has no family."

Another participant shared:

"One challenge is when they start celebrating... I am not allowed to participate... and I still have to explain it to relatives."

Similarly, another participant described:

"We no longer worship together... when they were still young, we all went together... but when they reached high school, things changed."

These responses suggest that ritual exclusion made religious differences more visible within everyday family life. Participants described how limited participation in family celebrations and worship affected shared experiences and, at times, created feelings of separation despite maintaining harmonious relationships. Although these situations did not always result in open conflict, they influenced participants' sense of inclusion and family togetherness.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith households often engage in fewer shared religious practices and may develop separate or flexible patterns of religious observance compared to same-faith families (Pew Research Center, 2016). Rahmadania (2024) further suggested that interfaith families often rely on tolerance, compromise, selective engagement, and occasional withdrawal to manage negative perceptions and maintain everyday harmony.

Moreover, several participants described experiencing emotional distance from relatives, where religious differences were felt not only through direct rejection but also through altered interactions, repeated questioning, and subtle forms of relational separation.

One participant explained:

"It feels like we are becoming outcasts... that is one of the hardest parts of having different religions... it feels like we are no longer included in the family."

Another participant shared:

"There came a point when we no longer acknowledged each other... some relatives became angry with me... I eventually accepted that it was really like that... I became different from them."

Similarly, another participant described:

"Why are you like that now?' When my mother first found out... she kept asking questions. 'Why do you attend worship there? Why did you go there?'"

These responses suggest that emotional isolation often developed through gradual relational changes rather than direct confrontation alone. Although family members remained physically connected, repeated questioning, reduced interaction, and perceived disapproval appeared to make belonging feel uncertain or conditional within the family. Participants' accounts indicate that religious difference may reshape emotional closeness and alter everyday family interactions even in the absence of overt conflict.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith relationships are often exposed to social disapproval and emotional isolation from extended family and community members, particularly in contexts that strongly value religious homogeneity (Basid et al., 2024). Similarly, Umar and Suryanto (2018) noted that social pressure and disapproval may heighten emotional strain within interfaith unions, while Yahya et al. (2016) suggested that resistance from relatives may intensify relational tension when interfaith relationships are perceived as threatening religious or cultural continuity.

Participants further described subtle ridicule as another form of hidden tension within family interactions. Although remarks were often expressed as jokes or casual comments, participants indicated that these interactions continued to highlight religious differences and carried emotional significance.

One participant explained:

"There were times when we became the target of teasing from relatives... 'Here come the Jehovah's Witnesses again.' ... 'Oh, maybe you have already gone beyond heaven.'"

Another participant shared:

"To them, the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses are just a disturbance, especially going out into the field ministry and regularly attending gatherings, because Jehovah's Witnesses consistently participate in those activities."

These responses suggest that teasing and dismissive humor may function as socially acceptable ways of highlighting religious difference within family interactions. Even without direct confrontation, repeated jokes and comments appeared to reinforce perceptions that certain religious practices were unusual, excessive, or disruptive within everyday family life.

The findings are consistent with Widyawati's (2024) discussion that interfaith relationships may be viewed as departures from socially expected family norms in contexts where shared religion is strongly valued. Such perceptions may contribute to indirect judgment, social pressure, and the need for explanation or justification within family and community relationships. Similarly, Yadav (2025) noted that social stigma toward interfaith relationships may persist even as such unions become more visible in society.

At times, tension became more personal when ordinary household disagreements were interpreted through religious differences. In these situations, religion was no longer treated as a background distinction but became associated with blame, judgment, and negative comparison.

One participant explained:

"My mother and my sibling are the ones who always argue... whenever there are problems at home, my mother suddenly connects them to religion... neither of them wants to give in."

Another participant shared:

"It cannot be avoided that they see it negatively, like you are a killjoy... even with small things, you cannot fit in with them. Because my beliefs are different, misunderstandings and awkwardness sometimes happen."

Similarly, another participant described:

"There are always comparison thoughts... questioning, 'Why am I like this?'"

These responses suggest that religious differences sometimes became intertwined with everyday family conflicts. Participants described how disagreements extended beyond specific issues and became associated with judgments about their religious identity, behavior, and ability to belong within the family. As a result, religion was occasionally perceived not only as a difference in belief but also as a source of misunderstanding that intensified existing family tensions.

The findings are consistent with Chebotareva and Volk (2020), who observed that interfaith couples may experience psychological and relational strain while negotiating religious differences and maintaining family harmony. Similarly, Rifayanti et al. (2025) emphasized that emotional and relational processes within the household strongly shape how religious differences are managed in everyday family life. Widiyanto (2023) further noted that understanding and authentic listening are important in sustaining harmony within family relationships where religious differences require ongoing adjustment and negotiation.

Collectively, the findings suggest that harmony within interfaith households may coexist with underlying emotional and relational tensions. Participants described experiences of ritual exclusion, emotional isolation, subtle ridicule, and religiously framed family disagreements. Although these experiences did not always result in open conflict, they influenced participants' sense of belonging, family participation, and emotional well-being.

Viewed through the Dual Concern Model, these patterns primarily reflect accommodating and avoiding conflict management styles. Participants often managed religious tensions through emotional restraint, silence, and selective non-confrontation in order to preserve family relationships. Although these responses helped maintain visible harmony, they also allowed some emotional and relational tensions to remain unresolved.

From the perspective of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, these responses may be understood within a relational framework that highly values harmony, shared belonging, and sensitivity toward others. Filipino psychological perspectives emphasize relational and community-oriented approaches to maintaining social harmony, where individuals often regulate disagreement carefully in order to preserve interpersonal relationships despite personal discomfort (Bautista & Aguilar, 2023). Within this context, the concept of *kapwa* highlights the importance of shared identity and mutual recognition, making experiences of exclusion, separation, or being treated differently emotionally

significant within family life. Related Filipino cultural values such as *hiya* and *pakikisama* may further help explain why tensions remained subtle yet emotionally meaningful. These values often encourage restraint, emotional regulation, adjustment, and the avoidance of direct confrontation in order to maintain social harmony and protect relationships even when discomfort persists (Maglalang et al., 2024).

Adaptive Household Strategies for Coexistence

Adaptive Household Strategies for Coexistence describes the practical and culturally responsive ways families manage religious differences within everyday life. Through negotiated routines, boundary-setting, mutual accommodation, and flexible participation in religious activities, maintained harmony, minimized conflict, and strengthened family cohesion. These strategies emphasized relational stability, shared responsibilities, and everyday cooperation in sustaining peaceful interfaith family life.

Parallel faith practice (separate but coexisting) emerged as a strategy that allowed family members to maintain distinct religious beliefs and practices while continuing to support one another through tolerance, non-interference, and shared family responsibilities. Several participants described situations in which family members practiced different religions while still participating in one another's routines and offering practical or emotional support.

As one participant narrated:

"Despite our different religions, we still help one another pray. We all pray for people who need help... I pray according to the practices of our religion, while my spouse prays in the Catholic way... Like earlier, when it was raining, I attended worship online and she did not interfere with me. After I finished, I accompanied her to their church, and I also did not disturb her"

Similarly, another participant shared:

"Even if we have different beliefs... for example, when we attend meetings or assemblies... she prepares the food, clothes, and bags even though she knows that my religion is different."

Another participant also explained:

"When it is their Iglesia celebration, and we celebrate Christmas and New Year, we are all together here. What I really want is for all of us to be complete together during New Year."

These responses suggest that parallel faith practice allowed religious differences to coexist alongside continued family unity. Participants described practicing their own beliefs while still offering practical assistance, emotional support, and participation in shared family activities. Rather than attempting to remove religious differences, families managed them through cooperation, mutual adjustment, and non-interference. Religious practices remained separate, while family relationships and responsibilities continued to be shared.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that religious differences do not necessarily weaken family cooperation when interfaith households practice mutual accommodation and relational adjustment (Normuslim, 2020). Similarly, Aman et al. (2019) noted that families may sustain positive relationships through mutual support despite differing religious commitments. Arweck (2022) likewise suggested that continued participation in family routines may help families navigate religious diversity while maintaining family cohesion.

A related adaptive strategy was selective participation in religious and cultural activities. Rather than fully participating in another religion's practices, participants described being physically present to support family members while observing the limits of their own religious beliefs. Their involvement reflected a desire to maintain family relationships without compromising personal religious convictions.

One participant explained:

"If I go there, it is because I want to be with my family, but I am not supposed to participate in the activities... that is why I am only able to attend. When he attends Catholic worship, I also go with him, but I only sit there quietly."

Similarly, another participant described:

"I no longer celebrate... I only accompany my mother during those occasions... but I still keep my distance."

Another participant shared:

"For example, if there is a baptism in a Catholic church, even though I am Born Again, I still enter the Catholic church, and that is okay."

These responses suggest that participants practiced negotiated participation by balancing family involvement with personal religious boundaries. They attended important family occasions, accompanied relatives, and remained physically present while limiting direct participation in religious rituals. In this way, selective participation functioned as a practical strategy that affirmed family solidarity without requiring religious conformity.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith couples often rely on negotiation, emotional understanding, and adaptive coping strategies to maintain stability within everyday family life (Kesavamani, 2023). Similarly, Ilin (2024) noted that empathy and mutual validation may help family members navigate religious differences while reducing relational withdrawal. Cerchiaro (2019) further emphasized that external support systems may strengthen families' ability to manage religious differences while reducing conflict.

Participants also described preventive communication as an important strategy for managing religious differences before they developed into conflict. Through explanation, clarification, and advance discussion, family members established clear expectations regarding religious practices and acceptable participation, reducing misunderstanding within the household.

As one participant narrated:

"There was a time when I attended, but first I asked many members of our religion about what I was allowed to do so that I would not commit any wrongdoing."

Another participant explained:

"We already explain things... especially at home, they already know what is allowed and what is not allowed. They already know our beliefs, so we always talk first so that tension or conflict will not develop."

Also, a participant described:

"I explain to other people who notice that my beliefs are different: 'I only did that because they are my family.'"

These responses suggest that participants intentionally used explanation, clarification, and advance discussion to prevent misunderstandings before they escalated into conflict. By openly communicating religious boundaries and expectations, families were able to reduce uncertainty, clarify acceptable behaviors, and support everyday cooperation despite religious differences.

The findings are consistent with Gordon and Arenstein (2017), who suggested that explanation and mutual learning may reduce misunderstanding within dual-faith families. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2023) noted that compromise and negotiated communication help reduce conflict within family relationships. Doherty and Brumbaugh (2024) likewise emphasized that perceived mutual understanding contributes to more stable and positive family relationships.

Participants also described establishing household rules and negotiated arrangements to minimize potential sources of conflict. Rather than leaving religious differences unmanaged, families developed practical agreements that guided everyday life while respecting each member's religious boundaries. These arrangements helped clarify expectations and supported peaceful coexistence within the household.

One participant stated:

"If you look at our house now, we no longer have a Christmas tree. We also do not eat blood anymore, so dishes like dinuguan are no longer cooked."

Another participant shared:

"We also have separate rooms, and we no longer have things like a Christmas tree."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Whatever decisions they agree on outside of religion, that is where the decisions are based."

These responses suggest that household rule-making functioned as a practical strategy for preventing recurring conflict within interfaith families. Participants described removing potential sources of disagreement, establishing clear boundaries, and making household decisions based on concerns other than religion. These negotiated arrangements allowed everyday family life to continue while respecting religious differences and minimizing opportunities for conflict.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith households often maintain harmony through negotiated boundaries and practical arrangements concerning celebrations, food practices, and daily routines (Mehta, 2020). Similarly, Cheney and Priest (2024) noted that clearly understood expectations and boundaries promote smoother family functioning by reducing misunderstanding. Dewatara and Agustin (2021) likewise suggested that clarifying acceptable behaviors early may prevent conflicts from escalating within intercultural and interfaith relationships.

Moreover, several participants emphasized that everyday support and reciprocity often outweigh religious differences within the household. Their accounts highlight how practical acts of helping, caregiving, and responding to one another's needs function as core expressions of family responsibility. These forms of cooperation strengthen kinship bonds, reinforce unity, and sustain family solidarity even when members hold different religious beliefs.

As one participant described:

"When we agree on something... even if we have different beliefs, as long as it is about helping each other, we still help."

Another participant noted:

"Family ties are still stronger because he is also the one taking care of me."

Similarly, a participant shared:

"When I have needs, he helps me... religion is no longer the focus... what matters is helping each other."

These responses suggest that shared family responsibilities strengthened family relationships despite religious differences. Participants viewed caregiving, assistance, and cooperation as responsibilities rooted in family membership rather than religious affiliation. By prioritizing everyday support over doctrinal differences, families reinforced unity and maintained harmonious relationships within the household.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that interfaith households may strengthen family stability through cooperative roles and shared responsibilities that promote partnership and collective functioning (Bao et al., 2025). Similarly, Rasyid and Siregar (2025) noted that acceptance, adjustment, and emotional support help families accommodate religious differences while maintaining strong relationships. Chu et al. (2023) likewise emphasized that practical reciprocity and shared responsibilities contribute to relational stability by shifting attention from ideological differences toward everyday family care.

Participants also described peaceful coexistence as a pattern that develops over time through repeated practice within the household. Rather than emerging as a single adjustment to religious difference, harmony becomes embedded in everyday family life through continued interaction, mutual accommodation, and shared experience. As this pattern is sustained, it is gradually internalized by family members and passed on to others in the household, allowing norms of respect, acceptance, and coexistence to be reproduced across generations.

One participant described:

"I grew up in this kind of family where there is no fighting... I adopted that as I grew older."

Another participant shared:

"What helped us overcome it is that we need to explain it to the next generation, even to our grandchildren."

Several participants also emphasized:

"As long as respect is never lost. Love for parents and siblings."

These responses suggest that peaceful coexistence became part of family life through repeated practice and intentional teaching across generations. Participants described learning respectful ways of managing religious differences while growing up and later passing these practices on to younger family members. In this way, harmony was sustained not only through everyday adjustment but also through the continued transmission of family values centered on respect, acceptance, and coexistence.

The findings are consistent with Hamdanah (2018), who suggested that family experiences shape how children understand and respond to religious diversity over time. Similarly, Lertsuwan (2018) noted that families who consistently practice respectful dialogue, accommodation, and supportive routines are more likely to develop lasting relational stability. Alampay (2024) likewise suggested that Filipino family values reinforce harmony through repeated modeling of respect, shared responsibility, and family unity.

Collectively, the findings suggest that interfaith households sustained peaceful coexistence through adaptive household strategies embedded in everyday family life. Participants described parallel faith practice, selective participation, preventive communication, household rule-making, shared family responsibilities, and the transmission of harmonious family practices across generations as practical ways of managing religious differences while preserving family unity. Rather than eliminating religious diversity, these strategies enabled family members to maintain their individual religious beliefs while continuously adjusting to one another's needs, responsibilities, and boundaries.

Viewed through the Dual Concern Model, these patterns primarily reflect compromising and accommodating conflict management styles. Participants demonstrated a high concern for maintaining family relationships while also preserving their personal religious identities. Through negotiated routines, practical adjustments, and open communication, they balanced individual religious convictions with the shared goal of sustaining harmonious family relationships.

From the perspective of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, these adaptive strategies may be understood through the concept of pakikisama, which emphasizes maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships through cooperation, adjustment, and consideration for others (Jose et al., 2024). Participants demonstrated pakikisama by negotiating everyday routines, communicating religious boundaries, sharing family responsibilities, and making practical adjustments that allowed religious differences to coexist while preserving family harmony.

Faith as Personal Anchor and Conflict Trigger

Analysis of the participants' accounts revealed that faith functioned both as a stabilizing foundation of personal identity and as a potential source of relational tension within families. Participants described religion as deeply influential in shaping their beliefs, values, and daily practices. At the same time, differences in religious commitment and interpretation sometimes created tension within family interactions. In many cases, faith served as a personal anchor that guided behavior and moral standards while also requiring adjustment and negotiation when beliefs differed within the household.

For several participants, religious commitment was closely connected to early family experiences and social environments. Faith was often described as developing through baptism, parental influence, and formative religious encounters rather than through independent individual reflection alone.

One participant stated:

"My parents had me baptized there, so I also did not transfer to another religion... I grew up in the Catholic religion and never left it."

Another participant shared:

"From our studies during our youth, I realized that there were things that needed to change so I could meet those standards, and that became the reason why I chose to submit myself to Jehovah God."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"When I first entered our church before, our pastor had an impact on me... I studied it more deeply after that... that was ultimately what led me to transfer religions."

These responses suggest that religious commitment was deeply rooted in relational and family contexts rather than emerging solely from personal doctrinal reflection. Participants described baptism, parental guidance, religious upbringing, and influential spiritual encounters as shaping their religious identity over time. Their accounts indicate that faith development often occurred through sustained exposure to religious practices, family traditions, and interpersonal influence within early social environments.

The findings are consistent with studies on religious socialization emphasizing the intergenerational transmission of beliefs through family systems. Smith (2023) suggested that religious continuity is often strengthened in traditions with clear expectations and strong cultural boundaries, where religion functions not only as belief but also as identity. Participants' descriptions of remaining within the religion in which they were raised, or developing commitment through prolonged exposure to religious teaching, reflect this pattern of continuity. Legault-Leclair (2026) further emphasized that family religious practices such as prayer, worship attendance, and religious attitudes significantly shape adult religiosity, although the strength of this influence may vary depending on broader cultural and social contexts.

Likewise, several participants described faith as a central moral authority that guided behavior, family roles, and everyday conduct within the household. Religious teachings were commonly treated as authoritative standards that shaped discipline, interpersonal responsibilities, and decision-making, often taking priority over social expectations.

One participant shared:

"I still insisted on following what I believe in... What we should follow are the standards of Jehovah God that we learned rather than the standards of people."

Another participant stated:

"We are trained not to argue... every week we are trained to become forgiving, low profile, and calm... One of the standards of being a Witness is submitting to one's husband."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Worship is really our priority because it is what gives us what is most essential... Those are the standards in the Bible that we follow."

These responses suggest that participants viewed religion not only as personal belief, but also as a guiding moral structure that regulated behavior and family relationships. Religious teachings were described as important standards for discipline, forgiveness, calmness, and relational restraint within the household. Participants also emphasized following divine principles over social expectations, indicating that faith functioned as a central basis for moral decision-making and everyday conduct even when tensions or disagreements emerged within family life.

The findings are consistent with Ward and King's (2018) discussion of intrinsic religiosity, which suggests that religious commitment may strengthen moral self-regulation and increase sensitivity to moral standards. Similarly, Kaur (2020) noted that religion, when internalized as part of moral identity, may encourage socially responsible behavior, empathy, and prosocial forms of interaction. The findings also align with Mooijman et al. (2018), who suggested that religious values may reinforce behavioral discipline, self-control, and adherence to moral expectations related to authority, loyalty, and proper conduct within social relationships.

In contrast, several participants described a more flexible orientation toward religious practice. Religious participation was often irregular, and faith did not always function as the primary basis for everyday decision-making within the household.

One participant shared:

"I am not really someone who always attends church every Sunday... It feels like religion is not entirely based on that."

Another participant explained:

"I am Catholic because my spouse is also a member of the church... It became a tradition for me as well... I am already old, so I no longer interfere with what he wants."

Similarly, another participant stated:

"I am the one who listens more to them. I do not interfere."

These responses suggest that some participants approached religion in a more flexible and accommodating manner, where faith functioned more as tradition, habit, or relational identity rather than as a strict guiding authority. Instead of strongly asserting doctrinal expectations, participants emphasized non-interference, adjustment, and acceptance of others' choices in order to maintain harmony within the household. The findings also indicate that differences in levels of religious commitment within the same family may create subtle forms of tension, particularly when religion holds greater importance for some members than for others.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that families often combine firmness and flexibility in managing religious life, especially when levels of religious commitment differ among members (Dollahite et al., 2019). Such flexibility may help reduce open conflict through accommodation and negotiated expectations, although differences in religious intensity may still create subtle relational strain. Similarly, Hohenschue, Riegel, and Zimmermann (2022) noted that religious commitment may vary across individuals depending on family socialization, personal experience, and institutional involvement, allowing high- and low-investment forms of religiosity to coexist within the same household. Research by Raesi et al. (2025) further suggested that religious orientation may influence family interaction and relationship dynamics in varying ways depending on how central religion is within everyday family life.

Participants also described certain religious traditions as highly structured and behaviorally demanding. Detailed expectations regarding dress, worship attendance, punctuality, and behavioral restrictions reinforced perceptions of religious strictness within everyday family life.

One participant shared:

"Usually, clothing becomes an issue because it should be modest... Usually, we have meetings two times a week... Friday is 2 hours and then Sunday is also 2 hours."

Another participant explained:

"Among Jehovah's Witnesses, there are many prohibitions that other religions no longer follow... arguing is prohibited."

Similarly, another participant stated:

"If worship is at four o'clock, you need to already be there before four o'clock."

These responses suggest that participants experienced religion as a structured system of rules, expectations, and prescribed behavior. Religious practices were described as involving clear standards related to appearance, conduct, punctuality, and participation, which distinguished members from others and reinforced commitment to the faith. Participants also implied that such structured expectations could heighten awareness of religious difference within the household, particularly when levels of commitment varied among family members.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that highly structured religious communities often maintain strong behavioral boundaries and expectations that reinforce religious identity and group belonging. Ransom, Monk, and Heim (2022) noted that strict participation requirements and regulated social practices within Jehovah's Witness communities may strengthen collective identity and reinforce clear distinctions between members and non-members. Similarly, Hookway and Habibis (2015) suggested that highly regulated religious environments may shape tightly defined moral and social worlds in which behavioral discipline becomes closely tied to identity formation. The findings also align with Allsop et al. (2021), who emphasized that clearly defined

religious rules and expectations may structure family interactions and reinforce collective identity within highly religious households.

Despite the potential for tension, several participants emphasized influencing others through personal example rather than direct confrontation. Religious commitment was expressed through observable behavior, consistency, and perceived positive change in conduct.

One participant shared:

"I show what I believe in... They can see your changes, that it is not about conflict but about firmly standing by what you believe."

Another participant explained:

"Before practicing our beliefs as Witnesses and serving outside, you should first serve within the home... Showing a good example helps."

Similarly, another participant stated:

"Sometimes they can see that my beliefs have had a better effect on me."

These responses suggest that participants preferred demonstrating faith through behavior rather than through argument or direct persuasion. Participants described allowing others to observe changes in their conduct, attitudes, and relationships as a way of expressing religious commitment. In this context, faith was communicated through consistency, service, calm behavior, and positive example, enabling participants to maintain religious conviction while avoiding unnecessary conflict within the household.

The findings are consistent with studies suggesting that religious influence within families often occurs through modeling and everyday behavior rather than direct enforcement. Hardy, Dollahite, and Baldwin (2019) noted that moral and religious development within families may be shaped through lived example, relational interaction, and consistent practice. Similarly, Stronge et al. (2020) found that religious commitment and conversion may be associated with increased self-regulation, moral consistency, and behavioral discipline, which may become visible through everyday conduct. The findings also align with Ahmad-Tajuddin, Wan-Mohamed, and Nik-Din (2025), who suggested that religious values and moral behavior are often reinforced through family relationships and social interaction, allowing conduct and relational example to become important forms of influence within religious life.

Collectively, the findings suggest that faith functioned both as a source of personal identity and as a guiding influence on family relationships within interfaith households. Participants described how religious socialization, faith as a moral anchor, pragmatic religious flexibility, perceived religious strictness, and moral modeling shaped the ways they understood themselves and related to other family members. Although differences in religious beliefs and practices sometimes created tension, faith also served as a source of moral guidance, influencing everyday behavior and interpersonal relationships.

Viewed through the Dual Concern Model, these patterns primarily reflect accommodating and compromising conflict management styles. Participants demonstrated commitment to their religious convictions while also recognizing the importance of maintaining harmonious family relationships. Rather than abandoning their beliefs or imposing them on others, they balanced religious commitment with consideration for the needs and perspectives of other family members.

From the perspective of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, these findings may be understood through the concept of *kapwa*, which emphasizes recognizing the shared humanity and dignity of others despite individual differences (Labor & Gastardo-Conaco, 2021). Participants expressed their faith through moral conduct, respect for others' religious choices, and efforts to preserve family relationships. These responses suggest that religious commitment was practiced in ways that remained sensitive to interpersonal relationships while preserving family harmony despite differences in faith.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that household harmony in interfaith Filipino households is sustained through relational practices that support the negotiation of religious differences while preserving family relationships. Practices such as mutual yielding (*bigayan*), non-imposition of beliefs, recognition of personal boundaries, and negotiated household routines illustrate how family members regulate disagreement in ways that prioritize respect and relational stability. At the same time, the presence of subtle tensions, emotional restraint, and strategic silence indicates that household harmony may sometimes coexist with underlying strain as families balance religious conviction with the desire to maintain it.

Interpreted through the lens of Dual Concern Theory, participants' experiences predominantly reflect accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and collaborative tendencies that balance concern for personal beliefs with concern for household harmony. The competing style characterized by strong self-assertion and low concern for others was rarely observed in participants' accounts. This pattern may be understood through the cultural perspective of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, where relational values such as *kapwa*, *pakikisama*, *pakikiramdam*, and *paggalang* encourage individuals to regulate assertiveness and prioritize the preservation of relationships when managing disagreement.

Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Led the conceptualization of the study and was primarily responsible for data gathering, data analysis, and the initial drafting of the manuscript, including the organization and interpretation of findings.

Author 2: Responsible for data gathering and the initial drafting of the manuscript, including the organization and interpretation of findings.

Author 3: Responsible for data gathering and the initial drafting of the manuscript, including the organization and interpretation of findings.

Author 4: Served as the thesis adviser, providing overall academic supervision, methodological guidance, and critical review throughout the research process.

Author 5: Contributed to the conceptualization of the study. Provided guidance for journal publication, including refinement of the manuscript structure, strengthening of scholarly arguments, and alignment with publication standards.

Author 6: Contributed to the fine-tuning of the paper, focusing on language polishing, coherence, and overall presentation quality for publication.

Funding

This study received no external funding.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere appreciation to the Research, Evaluation, and Publication Office (REPO) of San Pablo Colleges for granting permission to conduct this study and for providing guidance throughout the research process. Their support has been instrumental in the successful completion of this work.

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