Interfaith Marriage among Male Muslims: Factors and Effects (A Case of Abeokuta Metropolis, Ogun State of Nigeria)

By

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Abstract

In spite of the difference of opinion on the legality of a male Muslim marrying a Christian woman, some male Muslims enter into marriage with Christian women. This practice has been proven to have some negative effects on the couples, their children and in the Muslim ummah. Although there is existing literature on interfaith marriage between Moslems and Christians, most treat the topic from women's perspective; very few researchers have covered interfaith marriage from men's perspective, which is the focus of this study. Specifically, this study investigates the main causes and effects of male Muslims going into marriage with Christian women with the goal of suggesting ways of curbing the practice. This study employs quantitative survey research design, using questionnaire as research instrument. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was adopted and administered, using snowball sampling technique, among 106 Muslims sampled from families which are involved in interfaith marriage in Abeokuta metropolis of Ogun State. The data collected from the participants were statistically analysed with the use of SPSS version 24.

Keywords: interfaith, jihad, alh al-Kitab, ummah

Background to the study

In any society, religion determines people's day to day life and hardly can we find a phenomenon which is not guided by religion. Islam places emphasis on marriage as an institution of a great benefit to the individuals and society. Marriage has been in existence since the time of Adam as Allah provided for him a mate, Hawawu, and they had children. Allah says: "And among His signs is that: He had created mates for you from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility with them." (Q30:21). Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: "Marriage is part of my *Sunnah*. And whoever does not follow my *Sunnah* has nothing to do with me." However, this is guided by law in Islam. Marriage between couples who

share different faiths exits in many societies from time immemorial, despite the fact that it is not devoid of one problem or the other. Many male Muslims are faced with challenges as a result of being married to wives who are non-Muslim. Allah discourages inter-religious marriage in the Glorious Qur'an, except the woman or man embraces Islam sincerely and wholeheartedly. Allah says: "Do not marry unbelieving woman (idolaters) until they believe; a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you nor marry your (girls) to unbelievers until they believe…" (Q2:221).

This is a clear prescription for a Muslim before going into a marriage. From all indications, from the Glorious Qur'an and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), it is established that marriage is compulsory for all Muslims but guided by rules and regulations in Islam.

Allah legalizes the food and women of *ahl al-Kitāb* (Jews and Christians) for Muslim consumption. Allah says: "This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book." (Q5:6). Based on this, some male Muslims marry Christian women as wives. These marriages are not devoid of unpleasant implications on the couples, the children and the Muslim '*ummah* (community) at large.

Most of the children from these families often end up practising Christianity, the religion of their mother, as most of the wives (mothers) domineeringly take the children to churches, as they do not usually practise Islam with their husbands, or revert to Christianity if a slight condition of hardship befalls them, their husbands or children when their husbands are too incapacitated to stop them from this practice. In fact, the context of the *ayah*, which does not expressly state the conversion of the Christian woman to Islam as a condition for the legality of the marriage, engenders different opinions from Islamic scholars. Some Islamic scholars submit that a Christian woman under the husbandhood of a Muslim man can continue practising her religion (Christianity or Judaism) without necessarily converting to Islam. Yusuf (1974), in his commentary on the *ayah* (verse), submitted that a Muslim man may marry a Christian woman with the expectation that the Christian woman would need to succumb to the interest of her husband, religious interest inclusive.

However, in spite of the permissibility of a Muslim man marrying a chaste woman from the People of the Book, some Islamic jurists, such as the Hanafis, frown at the lawfulness of a male Muslim marrying a Christian

woman. Niekert and Vertuyten (2018), using Multi Structural Modelling Equation as statistical analysis technique, carried out a research involving 21,373 participants in 22 Muslim-majority countries on attitudes of Muslim parents towards interfaith marriage between Muslims and Christians. They found out that although some Muslims allowed interfaith marriage, some have negative attitude toward sons marrying a Christian woman while some exhibited strong negative attitude toward a daughter marrying a Christian husband. Their respective attitudes depended heavily on the depth or level of their religiosity. The study did not look at the effect of the Muslim man marrying a Christian woman. Moreover, the areas or places where the research was carried out were traditionally and culturally different from the Nigerian, Yoruba and Abeokuta environment. The unique relevance of this research is that it fills a vacuum by being the first time a study on the effect of a Muslim man marrying a Christian woman was carried out in the Abeokuta, and probably also in the Yoruba, environment.

Nolte studied religious coexistence among the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria, exploring interfaith marriage between Muslims and Christians as a positive anchor fostering their relationship. Though he confirmed that the Muslim-Christian marriage is problematic, he did not focus his study on the factors and effects of a Muslim man marrying a Christian woman.

Hence, this work aims at investigating the factors that are responsible for inter-religious marriage and its effects on the Muslim homes and the general Muslim *ummah* in Abeokuta metropolis. This is to serve as a guide for Muslim children who are yet to marry and as a tool for awakening and encouraging parents and Muslim clerics to preach against interfaith marriage, particularly Muslim-Christian marriage.

Research Methodology

The paper used survey design and utilized quantitative technique. A five-point Likert scale was adopted to gather the primary data. A snowball method was employed to administer the questionnaire across five main areas in the Abeokuta metropolis, namely, Tótoró, Àdátán, Ìjàyè, Rounder and Àgó-Ìbà. The total sample for this study was one hundred and six (106) respondents. Both males and females participated significantly in answering the questionnaire. The face and content validity of the instrument was checked by giving the questionnaire to some experts in Islamic Studies. All the item-statements were considered good for the research. Reliability test was carried out through a test-re-test method and there were close similarity in the results obtained from the pilot tests. This

means that the items were reliable. Data collected were subjected to simple percentages analysis using the SPSS version 24.

Principles of Marriage in Islam

Five major principles must be observed for a lawful marriage in Islam. These are:

Hijābwa al-Qubūl (Offer and Acceptance): This usually means a man offering a woman a marriage proposal and the latter accepting; however, a woman can as well offer a man a marriage proposal. The basic rule on this is that either party must voluntarily and consciously accept the offer, and not compelled or forced to accept. The offer and the acceptance may be oral or written and should not be made under any influence of intoxication nor while any party is sleeping. Islam greatly disapproves of forcing, particularly, a woman into marriage. This is supported by the hadith of the Prophet (P.B.U.H)) thus:

> The Apostle of Allah said: "Do not marry the divorced or widow except with their consent and do not marry the virgin except with their permission. They asked: "O you apostle of Allah! How would a virgin give her consent? He said (to them): "By keeping silent. (Muslim, Hadith no. 3306).

Consent of *Waliyy* (Guardian): This is another principle in the validity of marriage proposal. The approval of the guardian of a woman is compulsory before a marriage is considered valid in Islam. The guardian could be the biological father of the lady intending to be married or any of her paternal uncles who must be a Muslim or the imam of her mosque or organisation or the *qādi* (judge) of an Islamic court. Approval of *waliyy* is so important that without it there is no marriage. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an: "And wed them with the leave of their owners…*"* Q4:25.

Mahr (Pride Price): *Mahr* is a compulsory gift from a man to the lady. Allah says: "…And give them their dowers according to what is reasonable…" Q4:25. *Mahr* can be paid in advance or at the point of marriage or deferred to an agreed future time. No maximum or minimum amount of money is fixed for the *mahr* in the Qur'an but a sum could be fixed on the agreement of the contracting parties or by the mosque or the Muslim '*ummah* (community*).*

Two witnesses (*al-Shāhidān*): It is required that minimum of two witnesses which could be from the families of the man and/or the woman must attest to solemnisation of a marriage contract in Islam. This serves as mini publicity of a marriage.

Walimahal-Nikāh: This is the celebration of marriage ceremony. This is recommended but not compulsory, according to submission of the jurists. However, the Prophet enjoined the Muslims to observe marriage ceremony with at least a goat for people to dine with the couples. *Walimahal-nikāh*also serves as marriage publicity beyond the third principle of *nikāh* – two witnesses – as discussed above. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: "Celebrate (your marriage) even if it is with a sheep." (Ibn Ismail Hadith No. 2047)

The observance of the above conditions is to ensure that the marriage is not unintentional and that it is openly conducted with the support and awareness of family members and the public. For a male Muslim going into marriage with a female Christian, following the aforementioned principles, it should be crystal clear that such a woman must automatically become a Muslim, and it must be emphasised that she cannot revert or reverse. If this could be achieved, the action will be regarded as *jihād* (act of propagation of Islam) according to *Sharī'ah.*

Who should not go into Marriage in Islam?

An insane person, someone who is mentally sick (*al-majnūn),* whether a male or a female, is not allowed to marry in Islam as marriage covers a half of a Muslim's faith. Similarly, an immature person who is not yet considered as *al-bāligh* (adult) is prohibited from marriage until such reaches the puberty age. An impotent man (*ǒkóbó* in *Yoruba* language) is not allowed to go into marriage in Islam. A man must be sound and has capacity to have intercourse without any condition that can deprive the woman from having sex. Similarly, a woman must also possess the female organ for sexual intercourse. A woman with closed virgina (*lákíríboto*) is not allowed to go into marriage, according to *Sharī'ah*, because this would prevent the couple from having sexual intercourse and breeding children, thus jeopardising the objectives of marriage. A sick person that has a protracted health challenge(s) is not allowed to go into marriage. A man or woman can go for divorce if the other is unhealthy or a man can marry another woman to replace unhealthy wife. Thus, a man or woman going into marriage must be physically healthy. He or she must be free from any sort of communicable diseases, extremely bad body odour, mouth odour, eye cancer, leprosy, etc, that may be unbearable for either party.

In the case of the hermaphrodite, it is regarded as genderless. However, a hermaphrodite's eligibility to go into marriage depends on the predominant sexual organ. If the female organ is predominant over the male organ, the person is considered to be androgynous. Thus, she is treated as a woman and could be married as a wife to a husband. In like

manner, a person is considered a male if the male organ is more predominant than the female organ.

Prohibited Marriage in Islam

Other than the prohibition of Muslims from marrying non-Muslims (unbelievers) and/or the contentious opinions on the lawfulness of a Muslim man or woman marrying a Christian man or woman, some forms of marriage are prohibited in Islam. Allah mentions the categories of people prohibited from marrying one another in the Qur'an. Allah says:

> And marry not women who your fathers married except what is past. It was shameful and odious, an abominable custom indeed. Prohibited to you (for marriage) are your mothers; daughters; sisters; fathers' sisters; mothers' sisters; brothers' daughters; sisters' daughters; fosters mother (who gave you suck); foster sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom you have gone in - No prohibition if you have not gone in; (Those who have been) the wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters at one and at the same time, except for what is past; For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess; Thus has God ordained (prohibition) against you; except for these, all other are lawful… (Q4:22-24).

A marriage among these groups of people is subsumed as a consanguine marriage under the categories of prohibited marriages in Islam as discussed below.

Consanguine Marriage is a type of marriage between two couples who are closely related especially by blood. Etymologically, consanguine takes its root from two Latin words "*con*", a prefix which means "with", and "*sanguis*", which means blood; the combination of both means "with blood" i.e. related by blood. So, foster marriage, marrying one's sister, mother or niece is consanguineous (Marriam-Webster). And thus, it is prohibited in Islam.

Another form of prohibited marriage is polyandry, that is, one woman being married to more than one man at the same time. The word came from the Greek, "poly", which means "many" and "*andros*", which means "man" (Marriam-Webster). Allah also prohibits same sex marriage of any form be it man to man, which is called gay marriage, or woman to woman, which is called lesbianism. Same sex marriage, particularly man to man, was condemned by Allah. And Allah severely destroyed the people who practised gay sex in the time of Prophet Lut (Q9:70). Temporary marriage is a contract specified for a particular period of time which can be for some

months or years depending on the agreement between the couples. It was mostly practised by travelers or traders who used to travel to other places and stayed there for some time. The marriage is terminated at the expiration of the term of their agreement. Temporary marriage was said to have been allowed by Prophet Muhammad as contained in one of his *ahadith* compiled by Muslimas narrated by Abdullah bnMas'ud:

> Abdullah bnMas'ud reported: We were on an expedition with Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) and we had no women with us. We said: Should we not have ourselves castrated? He (peace be upon him) forbade us not to do so. He then granted us permission that we should contract temporary marriage for a stipulated period given her garment and Abdullah then recited this verse: Those who believe do not make unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you and do not transgress (Q5:87).

In spite of this hadith, *NikahMut'ah* (temporary marriage) is considered by the Sunni Muslims as unlawful and that the referred hadith has been abrogated (Q4:24). The practice is considered a systematic or indirect approval of prostitution. The Zaidi Shiites condemned it whereas the twelvers Shi'ites still allow temporary marriage in their doctrines (Sundawi, 2013). Submissively, any of the marriages above is illicit in Islam.

Demographic Profiles of Respondents

From the gender profiles of the participants, it is revealed that females participated most in the study with 65.1% of the sample size. A total of 34.9% was males. This reveals that females were more available than their male counterparts and they were ready to partake in the study. The participants fell between age 18 and 40 years. None of the participants was above the age of 40 years. Most of the participants were young couples within the age of 18 and 30 years. Age 26 - 30 was the highest with 34.0% and followed by age 18-25 with 33%. The result of the survey indicated that 35.8% of the respondents were single – children of couples of inter-religious marriage family. A total of 39.6% of the respondents were married and were still living together as husbands and wives. However, 20.8% had separated and only 4 respondents were recorded as widows.

Discussion of Findings

Factors of Inter-Religious Marriage

Eight item statements were used to investigate the factors that are responsible for a Muslim man going into interfaith marriage with a Christian woman as contained in Table 2 (See Appendix). It is established

from the result that 50% of the respondents agreed that irreligiousness can make someone change his or her religion. That is, if the level of someone's involvement in one's early religion is low, the practice of such a religion, generally, will not be part and parcel of such a person's life. Thus, with any minor reason(s), one could easily change his/her religion to join another one that appeals to him/her; 33% of the participants strongly submitted that irreligiousness could be one of the influencing factors that can make a person change his/her religion for another. Of the total respondents, 83% were of the view that irreligiousness is a factor capable of influencing an adherent to convert to another religion.

It was also gathered that experiencing a long delay before getting married can tempt a man or a woman to convert to another religion if their prospective partner presents that as a pre-requisite for agreeing to be their spouse. This fact is established from the Table as 61% of the total respondents agreed that a long delay in finding a prospective spouse can make one to change his or her religion if he or she could not find a partner from his or her own religion, and if conversion is made a pre-marital condition for the man or woman.

The item-statement, "lack of sound knowledge of one's religion leads to inter-religious marriage", was supported by 53.8% of the total respondents as 30.2% and 23.6% agreed and strongly agreed to the statement. This can be interpreted that many participants affirmed that if one does not possess a good knowledge of the doctrines of one's religion, he/she can take a decision outside the dictates of his or her religion at any time.

A total number of 66 participants, who form 62.2% of the total respondents, submitted that Western education neutralises stern decision to stick to marrying a Muslim woman as evident from the results depicted in Table 2. Thus, it can be generalised that Western education makes some Moslem men less discriminating and influences them into marrying Christian women. However, 40% of the respondents share the view that Western education may not necessarily influence a person to marry indiscriminatingly someone with whom one shares different faith.

From the results it is depicted that 51% of the total respondents attested that association with Christian friends can lead to inter-religious marriage among the adherents of the two religions. However, 40% of the respondents disagreed while 9% stayed neutral to the claim that when one associates with people with whom one shares different faith, that does not make one to marry from among the adherents of the other faith. In this case, we can conclude that a half of the respondents agreed while another half of them disagreed with the claim. Therefore, Western education, as an

influencing factor that makes one marry from other religious faithful, may not be strong enough but can be combined with other factors emanating from Western educational institution environment, such as peer group.

"Nonchalant attitudes of parents in guiding their children towards the choice of partner selection leads to inter-religious marriage" recorded 61.3% support. This implies that the number of those who supported that parents' guide can influence children's decision are more than those who did not see it as significant as only 33% disagreed while 5.7% were neutral to the item statement.

The result exhibits that lack of access to a stable Islamic education by Muslim children can lead to inter-religious marriage when they grow up. A total of 75.5%, which forms the majority of the total respondents and considered very high, agreed that if a child is not given adequate knowledge of Islamic education, the tendency for such a child to marry any person as a wife is high as he will not consider it as a discouraging act.

The statement, "Love of money can make me to marry a spouse of different faith from mine", received a high support from the respondents as a total of 67% of the respondents are of the opinion that love of money can make many people to ignore their faith when it comes to the issue of selecting a wife or a husband. Only 24.5% disagreed to the opinion that love of money can make them to ignore his/her faith in selecting a wife or a husband. This set of people might be the few people who understand the hadith of the Prophet that enjoins the Muslims to consider religion first and most important and that they should not marry for the sake of money while 8.5% stood neutral to the opinion.

From the results exhibited in the Table, three of the eight (8) item-statements employed to determine the influencing factors towards marrying a partner with whom one share different faith have the highest percentages of acceptance, as follows: irreligiousness (83%); lack of access to a stable Islamic education by Muslim children (75.5%); and love of money (67%). This means that these three factors, among others, should be strictly and strongly given adequate attention, concern and focus to reduce the rate of male Muslims leaving female Muslims to marry non-Muslims, a practice which, in the long run, leads to children of such interfaith marriages taking to their mothers' religion. In some cases, male Muslims – the husbands of non-Moslem wives – even drop Islam for Christianity, a situation which is abhorrent in the sight of Allah.

Effects of Inter-Religious Marriage among Muslim Families

Table 2 (See Appendix) displays the responses of the respondents to the

items designed to measure the effects of inter-religious marriage with Christian women among Muslim families in Abeokuta metropolis. The item "they suffer support from in-laws" reflects that 74.5% of the respondents confirmed that the couples are deprived the support of their parents, particularly those whose parents were against the union. This means that family consent and approval of marriage union is very core and significant for a well-laid marriage and a stable family life as stated in the Qur'an. Allah says "…and marry them with the consent of their relatives…" Q4:24. Only 15.1% disagree that the couple may not suffer family support while 10.4% were neutral to the item statement.

The Table depicts that marriage between persons of different faith may end up in divorce. This conclusion is supported by the responses of the respondents to the item-statement, "Inter-religious marriage seldom leads to separation/divorce", as 58.5% of the respondents submitted to the statement. However, 19.8% disagreed with the statement while 21.7% were neutral to the statement. This means that an appreciable number of respondents, because they think differently or because of their experiences, do not support the statement.

It is depicted in the Table that interfaith marriage often reduces love between the man and the woman as the marriage grows in age. This can occur when one of the partners in interfaith marriage reverts to his or her at-birth religion or when religious practices, such as festivals, clash or when there is a conflict of interest or ideology in relation to the naming of a new-born baby. There can also be misunderstanding when a spouse is trying to pull the children to his or her religious side. This statement was supported by 60.4% of the respondents. However, 24.6% disagreed with the statement while 16% were neutral. This means that 40.6% did not support the statement. Although this is an appreciable number, the percentage of those who supported the statement is significantly higher than the percentage of those who did not support it.

The statement, "Inter-religious marriage begets misunderstanding", was opposed by 24.5% of the respondents while 15.1% were neutral to the statement; this means that 39.6% of the respondents did not support the claim. Yet, the statement received the support of 60.4% of the respondents, thereby establishing the fact that misunderstanding is inevitable when partners in marriage do not embrace one faith; arriving at unanimous decisions, in religious matters, may be difficult in most cases. Undue interference, regarding issues of faith, from family and friends of the couple may lead to disagreements between the spouses.

Struggle over control of the children is another likely effect of inter-

religious marriage. A total of 67.1% of the respondents agreed that the matter of who controls the children is usually a problem in an interfaith marriage as each of the two parties would like the children to practise his or her religion. Even when the couple practises the same faith, the one who conditionally changed his or her faith may not bother if any of the children chooses to practise his or her former religion. From this result, it can be interpreted that each spouse would struggle to pull the children to his or her side. In some cases, the couple may create religious division among the children by struggling to win any of the children to his or her own side. I have a practical experience of a friend, at Camp, a suburb of Abeokuta metropolis, who married a Christian woman. The Christian woman retained her religion and that influenced the first born of their three children, a male child, to become a Christian while the remaining two children, who were female, remained Moslems. A similar situation occurred in Osiele, a suburb of Abeokuta metropolis, where the mother pulled all the children into Christianity with the exemption of one, the only male child of the five children of the family. The result of the survey corroborated these experiences.

Misunderstandings and disagreements between the spouses could generate incessant commotion in the family. This statement is supported by the result stated in the Table as 35.8% and 33%, which form a total of 68.8% of the respondents, agreed and strongly agreed to the statement that inter-religious marriage can bring about incessant commotions among couples.

From the Table, three of the six items used to explore the effects of inter-religious marriage among the couples recorded the highest percentages. "A couple of different faiths suffer support from the in-laws" recorded 74.5% submission by the respondents and has the highest percentage. This is followed by problem of incessant commotions (68.8%) and struggle over who wins control over the children (67.1%). This implies that these three crises and hurdles are usually confronted by couples from different religious background and practices. As most of the couples do not enjoy the support of the in-laws and are usually engaged in misunderstanding and commotion, thus, the marriage, sometimes, ends up in separation and/or divorce.

Effects of Inter-religious Marriage on the Children

As contained in the results, most children from inter-religious families often have misunderstanding among themselves. This may lead to unnecessary grudges and gossips as there is tendency for one child to follow his or her mother while the other follows the father. Since the children differ in religious practice, contradictions and differences of

opinion cannot be ruled out among them. Looking at the result, 59.4% of the respondents affirmed that an inter-religious marriage, where the children effectually share different faiths, has the tendency of breeding frequent misunderstanding in the family.

Equal number of respondents agreed and disagreed with the statement that inter-religious marriage can reduce love among the children. This is shown in their responses to the item-statement which recorded 46.2% (agreed) and 46.2% (disagreed). However, 7.5% were neutral which can be grouped with those who disagreed, forming 53.7% representing those who disagreed with the statement. This means that, even if there occurs some misunderstanding among the children, it may not necessarily make them to hate themselves as perceived by the 46.2% who agreed with the statement.

In some cases, the children can face confusion in religion selection. Some children can follow their father in his religion while others follow the mother. There may be some inconsistency in the choice of the religion the children are likely to practise. The result from the Table attests that 65.1 % of the respondents submitted that children from inter-religious family background face the challenges of religious selection.

The item-statement "A child who chooses the mother's religion loses the favour and interest of his/her father" was supported by 49.1% while 37.7% disagreed with the statement while 13.2% were neutral. This means that it is unlikely for the father not to be displeased with any child who refuses to practise his religion except the father is a type who is irreligious and allows his children to practise any religion of their choice. However, a mother might not also be well pleased with any child who does not follow her in her religion, particularly if the mother is highly inclined towards her at-birth religion and never joined her husband in his religion from the first day of their marriage.

The Table also exhibits that 52.8% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, "A child who follows father's religion may suffer some maltreatments from the mother". However, 35.9% of the respondents agreed while 11.3% were neutral. The result reflects a true picture of an ideal family in Yorubaland and in Islam while the choice of the father is superior in the family. The result takes same direction with the previous item-statement, "A child who chooses the mother's religious loses the favour and interest from his father", which reflects the supremacy of the husband over the religious choice of the children in an ideal family.

Children of inter-religious marriage do suffer some psychological problems. Some of them do face problems with regard to choosing

between Islam and Christianity. If a wife does not practise Islam with the husband, the children face some maltreatments from either the father or mother depending on whose religion they follow. There is often misunderstanding among the children as there can be some disagreements on issues that have to do with religious rituals.

Effects of Inter-religious Marriage on Muslim '*Ummah*

The results on the effects of inter-religious marriage between male Muslims and female Christians on the Muslim '*ummah* reveal that Muslims lose most of their children to Christianity. The item recorded 81.1% support of the respondents. Only 4.7% disagreed while 14.2 were neutral to the statement. This reveals that most of the children from the Muslim families whose mothers or wives are Christians by birth are diverted to the religion of the mothers – Christianity. This might be as a result of the weaknesses of most Muslim husbands who fail to give strong religious practice background to the children at their childhood or as their neglect of the children to a total care of their mothers or a result of the death of the husbands before the children are mature to choose for themselves or decide on their own.

The Table also shows that 62.3% of the respondents agreed that most Muslims who marry Christians as wives often convert to Christianity. Only 19.8% disagreed with the statement while 17.9% were neutral. This might be as a result of the high level of irreligiousness of many Muslim men who out of their irreligiousness fall into marrying Christian wives and afterwards, instead of defending his religion and preaching it to the wives, they fall out of Islam to join Christianity.

It is also observed from the findings that most Christians who marry Muslim husbands stick to Christianity and fail to practise Islam with their husbands. The objective of *Sharī'ah* which considers marrying non-Muslim wives as a form of *jihād* with the aim of converting the wives to Islam is defeated. This was confirmed from the responses of the respondents from the Table as 51% agreed to the statement, "Most Christians who marry Muslim husbands often retain their Christianity". Only 28.3 disagreed to the statement while 20.8% were neutral.

Muslim '*ummah* is at a great disadvantage engaging in inter-religious marriage with Christian women. The '*ummah* loses most of the children from this marriage to Christianity. Most of the wives do not really join Islam with their husbands and even many of the husbands, instead of winning the wives into Islam, it is them who are won into Christianity.

Conclusion

Though Islam permits Muslims to marry Christian women, it is found out that Muslims and Muslim 'ummah are usually at disadvantage engaging in inter-religious marriage with Christian women as enough Islamic education are not provided for the Muslim children right from their childhood to their adulthood, thus, they are simply carried away from their religion by Christian women who equally seize the control of the children. Muslim clerics have been resolute in the discharge of their obligations in guiding their congregants (parents and children) religiously and in equipping them with strong Islamic *'aqīdah.* Following the results from this study, in order to reduce the involvement of Muslim men in marrying Christian women and to achieve the reason why some men go into it as an act of *jihād* aimed at making the wives and the children to practice Islam, the following are suggested:

1. Inter-religious marriage with Christian women should be discouraged for Muslim men.

2. Muslim parents should give their children adequate Arabic and Islamic education through which they would have more knowledge about their religion.

3. Islamic organisations should establish marital counselling centres where Muslim singles will be orientated prior to marriage.

4. Muslim parents can support their children in searching for prospective partners.

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