

INTERLEGALITY IN THE SPACE OF SHARIA: RETHINKING ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW IN ACEH, INDONESIA



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Abstract

This article examines how Islamic family law governance operates within a plural legal system in Aceh, Indonesia, and questions the adequacy of conventional legal pluralism in explaining such practices. While previous studies have recognized the coexistence of state law, Islamic law, and custom, they often remain descriptive and overlook the dynamic interaction between these systems. This study offers a novel contribution by developing the concept of interlegal governance to explain how legal norms intersect and are negotiated in practice, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups. Using a qualitative socio-legal approach based on structured literature synthesis (1994–2025), this article analyzes how legal actors navigate multiple legal forums in resolving family disputes. The findings identify four interlegal patterns: normative harmonization, selective incorporation, jurisdictional bifurcation, and forum navigation. These patterns demonstrate that Islamic family law in Aceh is not governed by a single authority but through dynamic interaction among legal systems. Importantly, the study reveals that interlegality is normatively ambivalent—it can expand access to justice while also reproducing inequalities, particularly affecting women and children. This article argues that understanding Islamic law in plural societies requires moving beyond legal pluralism toward an interlegal perspective that captures both interactions and its implications for justice.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana tata kelola hukum keluarga Islam beroperasi dalam sistem hukum yang plural di Aceh, Indonesia, serta mempertanyakan kecukupan konsep pluralisme hukum konvensional dalam menjelaskan praktik tersebut. Meskipun penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya telah mengakui koeksistensi antara hukum negara, hukum Islam, dan hukum adat, sebagian besar masih bersifat deskriptif dan belum mampu menangkap interaksi dinamis di antara sistem-sistem hukum tersebut. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi baru dengan mengembangkan konsep tata kelola interlegal (interlegal governance) untuk menjelaskan bagaimana norma-norma hukum saling berinteraksi dan dinegosiasikan dalam praktik, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan kelompok rentan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosio-legal kualitatif yang didasarkan pada sintesis literatur terstruktur (1994–2025), artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana para aktor hukum menavigasi berbagai forum hukum dalam penyelesaian sengketa keluarga. Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi empat pola interlegal, yaitu: harmonisasi normatif (normative harmonization), inkorporasi selektif (selective incorporation), bifurkasi yurisdiksi (jurisdictional bifurcation), dan navigasi forum (forum navigation). Pola-pola ini menunjukkan bahwa hukum keluarga Islam di Aceh tidak diatur oleh satu otoritas tunggal, melainkan melalui interaksi dinamis antara berbagai sistem hukum. Lebih jauh, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa interlegalitas memiliki sifat yang ambivalen secara normatif—di satu sisi dapat memperluas akses terhadap keadilan, tetapi di sisi lain juga dapat mereproduksi ketimpangan, terutama yang berdampak pada perempuan dan anak-anak. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini berargumen bahwa pemahaman terhadap hukum Islam dalam masyarakat yang plural memerlukan pergeseran dari perspektif pluralisme hukum menuju perspektif interlegal.



yang mampu menangkap baik interaksi antarsistem hukum maupun implikasinya terhadap keadilan.

INTRDUCTION

The governance of Islamic law in contemporary Muslim societies increasingly takes place within a complex normative environment marked by the coexistence of multiple legal systems. In this context, Islamic law does not operate as a single and autonomous legal order, but interacts with state law, customary norms, and everyday social practices.

¹ This condition is commonly understood as legal pluralism and has become an important concern in socio–legal studies, particularly in explaining how legal authority is established, negotiated, and practiced in plural societies. ² Aceh, Indonesia, represents a significant case because Islamic law has been formally institutionalized through special autonomy while continuing to operate alongside national law and customary norms.

Indonesia is one of the most prominent examples of legal pluralism, where state law, Islamic law, and customary law coexist within a single legal landscape. ³ In the field of family law, this pluralism is reflected in the implementation of the 1974 Marriage Law, the Compilation of Islamic Law, and local normative practices that continue to shape the resolution of family disputes. ⁴ In Aceh, the implementation of Sharia–based regulations further intensifies this plural legal setting. ⁵ Although Religious Courts possess formal jurisdiction over family law matters, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody, many disputes are also resolved through informal mediation involving families, community leaders⁶, religious authorities, and customary institutions. ⁷

Previous studies have recognized the coexistence of state law, Islamic law, and customary law in Indonesia and Aceh. ⁸ However, many of these studies tend to remain descriptive by mapping the presence of different legal systems without sufficiently explaining how these systems interact in practice. ⁹ Studies on Sharia implementation in Aceh have also paid greater attention to political, institutional, and criminal law aspects

¹ Engle Merry, Sally. "Legal Pluralism." *Law & Society Review*, vol. 22, no. 5, 1988, hlm. 869–96. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>.

² Griffiths, John. "What Is Legal Pluralism?" *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol. 18, no. 24, Januari 1986, hlm. 1–55. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>.

³ Huis, Stijn Cornelis van. *Islamic Courts and Women's Divorce Rights in Indonesia: The Cases of Cianjur and Bulukumba*. Wüthrmann, 2015. E. M. Meijers Instituut Voor Rechtswetenschappelijk Onderzoek, MI 251.

⁴ Lindsey, Tim, ed. *Indonesia: Law and Society*. 2nd ed. Sydney: Federation Press, 2008

⁵ Bowen, John Richard. *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁶ Nurlaelawati, Euis. *Modernization, Tradition and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Courts*. Amsterdam University Press, 2010. ICAS Publications Series.

⁷ Bukido, Rosdalina, dkk. "Reconciling Traditions: The Role of Local Wisdom in Mediating Divorce in Indonesia's Religious Courts." *Khazanah Sosial*, vol. 6, no. 2, Juli 2024, hlm. 307–20. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v6i2.32809>.

⁸ Feener, R. Michael. *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2014. Oxford Islamic Legal Studies.

⁹ Salim, Arskal. *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748693481>.

^{10, 11} while the governance of Islamic family law remains relatively underexplored. This limitation is significant because family law is closely connected to everyday social life and directly affects vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. ^{12 13}

To address this limitation, this article develops the concept of interlegal governance as an analytical framework. Interlegality refers to the dynamic interaction between different legal systems within a single social space. ¹⁴ Unlike conventional legal pluralism, which emphasizes the coexistence of legal orders, interlegality focuses on the permeability of legal boundaries, the negotiation of norms, and the movement of legal actors across different forums. ¹⁵ In this sense, Islamic family law in Aceh should not be understood merely as the application of formal legal rules, but as a process shaped by interaction among state law, Islamic law, customary norms, and social practices. ¹⁶

The central problem addressed in this study is that conventional legal pluralism is inadequate to explain how Islamic family law actually operates in Aceh. ¹⁷ A non-interlegal perspective risks reducing law to separate and stable systems, overlooking the role of actors who navigate multiple legal forums, and producing legal interpretations that do not reflect social practice. In reality, legal processes in Aceh often involve simultaneous engagement with formal courts, religious norms, customary mediation¹⁸, and family-based negotiation. Therefore, understanding Islamic family law in Aceh requires an approach that captures not only the existence of multiple legal systems but also their interaction and consequences for justice.

Based on this problem, this study formulates the following research question: how does interlegality shape the governance of Islamic family law in Aceh, and what are its implications for justice, particularly for vulnerable groups? Accordingly, this study aims to explain the patterns of interaction among state law, Islamic law, and customary law in the governance of Islamic family law in Aceh. It also aims to develop interlegal governance as an analytical concept and to assess how interlegal practices may both expand access to justice and reproduce inequalities.

This study employs a qualitative socio-legal approach based on structured literature synthesis covering the period 1994–2025. The analysis is conducted by examining relevant academic literature, legal documents, and previous empirical studies on legal pluralism, interlegality, Sharia implementation, and Islamic family law in Aceh. Through

¹⁰ Buehler, Michael. *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

¹¹ Hefner, Robert W., ed. *Shari'a Politics: Islamic Law and Society in the Modern World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

¹² Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. *Marriage on Trial: Islamic Family Law in Iran and Morocco*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2000.

¹³ Tucker, Judith E. *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*. 1st ed, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Themes in Islamic Law 3.

¹⁴ Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. "Law: A Map of Misreading—Toward a Postmodern Conception of Law." *Journal of Law and Society* 14, no. 3 (1987): 279–302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410186>.

¹⁵ Walker, Neil. "Legalising Inter-legality." *European Law Open* 1, no. 1 (2022): 216–227. <https://doi.org/10.1017/elo.2022.13>.

¹⁶ Afrianty, Dina. *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh*. 1 ed., Routledge, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744568>.

¹⁷ Sumardi, Dedi, Ratno Lukito, and Moch. Nur Ichwan. "Legal Pluralism within the Space of Sharia: Interlegality of Criminal Law Traditions in Aceh, Indonesia." *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 1 (2021): 426–449. <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i1.9122>.

¹⁸ Lukito, Ratno. *Legal Pluralism in Indonesia*. 0 ed., Routledge, 2012. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203113134>.

this approach, the study identifies recurring patterns of legal interaction and analyzes their implications for family dispute resolution.

This article argues that Islamic family law in Aceh is not governed by a single legal authority but through dynamic interaction among multiple legal systems. The article contributes to socio–legal scholarship by moving beyond the descriptive framework of legal pluralism and proposing interlegal governance as a more suitable perspective for understanding Islamic law in plural societies. The discussion proceeds by explaining the research method, analyzing the patterns of interlegal governance, and examining their implications for justice and legal reform.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative socio–legal approach that focuses on analyzing the relationship between legal norms and social practices in the context of legal pluralism. Unlike a purely doctrinal approach that positions law as an autonomous system of norms, the socio–legal approach views law as a social phenomenon produced,¹⁹ negotiated, and operated within the context of social interaction.²⁰ Within this framework, research aims not only to identify legal rules but also to understand how these laws function in practice.

By design, this study does not utilize primary field data collection, but rather is based on a structured literature synthesis of relevant secondary sources. The research data consists of academic literature, books, journal articles, and legal documents published between 1994 and 2025. This time span was chosen to capture the development of discourse on legal pluralism and Sharia implementation in Indonesia, particularly since the emergence of legal reform and special autonomy in Aceh in the early 2000.²¹ Data sources were selected purposively, considering their relevance to three main aspects of the study: legal pluralism, interlegality, and the practice of Islamic family law in Aceh.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic search of academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and digital library catalogs, using keywords such as legal pluralism, interlegality, Islamic family law, and Aceh. The selected literature was then selected based on its academic quality (peer–reviewed), conceptual relevance, and contribution to the understanding of legal practice. Additionally, legal documents such as the Marriage Law, the Compilation of Islamic Law, and Acehnese qanuns were analyzed to understand the formal normative framework that forms the context for legal interactions.

The analytical methods used are conceptual and thematic synthesis. The conceptual synthesis is conducted by integrating the theory of strong legal pluralism²² with the concept of interlegality²³ to develop an analytical framework capable of explaining the interactions between legal systems. Meanwhile, the thematic synthesis is conducted by

¹⁹ Galanter, Marc. "Justice in Many Rooms: Courts, Private Ordering, and Indigenous Law." *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 19, no. 1 (1981): 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1981.10756257>

²⁰ Cotterrell, Roger. *Law, Culture and Society: Legal Ideas in the Mirror of Social Theory*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315095114>

²¹ Feener, R. Michael. *Sharia and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199324280.001.0001>

²² Griffiths, John. "What Is Legal Pluralism?" *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 24, no. 1 (1986): 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>

²³ Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. "Law: A Map of Misreading—Toward a Postmodern Conception of Law." *Journal of Law and Society* 14, no. 3 (1987): 279–302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410186>

identifying recurring patterns in the literature related to how state law, Islamic law, and customary law interact in family dispute resolution practices²⁴.

Responding to methodological criticisms that literature –based research risks being secondary and failing to produce new findings, this study explicitly positions literature synthesis as an analytical method, rather than merely a descriptive compilation. In other words, this study does not simply summarize previous research findings but reinterprets existing data through an interlegality framework. This approach allows for the identification of patterns of legal interaction previously scattered across various studies but not yet systematically formulated as interlegal governance mechanisms.

To strengthen the validity of the analysis, this study also uses literature –based case illustrations as a form of empirical anchoring. For example, in inheritance disputes, several studies show that resolution is not always directly through religious courts, but often involves family and customary mediation before proceeding to the formal realm.²⁵ Similarly, in post –divorce child custody cases, legal decisions are often determined not only by formal norms but also by social considerations, power relations within the family, and the economic standing of the parties.²⁶ These cases demonstrate that legal practice does not proceed linearly, but through a process of negotiation between various legal systems.

Thus, although this research does not produce primary empirical data, it is still able to explain everyday legal practices through a synthetic approach that connects various existing empirical findings. This approach aligns with the tradition of socio –legal research that emphasizes that legal understanding can be constructed through critical analysis of practices documented in the literature.²⁷

However, this study has limitations. The reliance on secondary data means that the analysis does not fully capture local variations and current dynamics that may be occurring on the ground. Furthermore, interpretations of legal practices depend on the quality and perspective of the research cited. Therefore, this study is not intended as a substitute for empirical studies, but rather as a conceptual and analytical foundation that can be tested and further developed through fieldwork.

Despite these limitations, this study still makes a methodological contribution by demonstrating that a systematic and theory –based literature synthesis can yield new insights into legal practice. In this context, interlegality is used not merely as a theoretical concept but as an analytical tool for a more comprehensive re –reading of Islamic family law practices in Aceh.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Interlegality as Governance: Beyond Coexistence toward Interaction

The results of this study indicate that the governance of Islamic family law in Aceh cannot be understood simply as the coexistence of various legal systems, but rather as an active interlegal process, in which state law, Islamic law, and customary norms interact in

²⁴ van Huis, Stijn. *Islamic Courts and Women's Divorce Rights in Indonesia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789462981521>

²⁵ Bowen, John R. *Islam, Law and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511802212>.

²⁶ van Huis, Stijn. *Islamic Courts and Women's Divorce Rights in Indonesia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789462981521>.

²⁷ Cotterrell, Roger. *Law, Culture and Society: Legal Ideas in the Mirror of Social Theory*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315095114>

everyday practice. This finding reinforces criticisms of conventional approaches to legal pluralism, which tend to be static and descriptive^{28,29} Conversely, the literature suggests that legal practice in Aceh is more appropriately understood as an arena of dynamic normative interaction,³⁰ as theorized in the concept of interlegality.³¹

In the Indonesian context,³² legal pluralism has long been recognized as an inherent characteristic of the legal system.³³ However, the findings of this study indicate that in the practice of Islamic family law, these systems not only coexist but also shape each other through institutional and social mechanisms. This is evident in how Islamic legal norms are institutionalized through state law but remain practiced within a social context influenced by customs and community relations.³⁴

Thus, the results of this study confirm that interlegality is not merely a condition, but a legal governance mechanism (interlegal governance) that shapes how family disputes are resolved.

Layered Dispute Resolution: Empirical Patterns of Interlegal Practice

One key finding is the existence of a layered dispute resolution pattern in Islamic family law in Aceh. The literature shows that family disputes—such as divorce, inheritance, and custody—are rarely brought directly to the Religious Courts.³⁵ Instead, resolution often begins through informal mechanisms, such as family mediation or traditional leaders.³⁶

As an empirical illustration, in divorce cases in Aceh, van Huis's (2017) study shows that women often first seek informal mediation before filing a lawsuit in court. This process is driven not only by social norms but also by pragmatic considerations such as cost, social stigma, and power relations within the family. This suggests that the choice of forum is not merely procedural but also part of a legal strategy influenced by the social context.³⁷

Similar findings were also found in Bowen's (2003) study, which showed that in inheritance disputes, families often resolve property division through customary

²⁸ Griffiths, John. "What Is Legal Pluralism?" *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 24, no. 1 (1986): 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>.

²⁹ Merry, Sally Engle. "Legal Pluralism." *Law & Society Review* 22, no. 5 (1988): 869–896. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>

³⁰ Walker, Neil. "Legalising Inter—Legality." *European Law Open*, vol. 1, no. 1, Maret 2022, hlm. 216–27. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1017/elo.2022.4>.

³¹ Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. "Law: A Map of Misreading—Toward a Postmodern Conception of Law." *Journal of Law and Society* 14, no. 3 (1987): 279–302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410186>.

³² Lindsey, Tim, ed. *Indonesia: Law and Society*. 2nd ed. Sydney: Federation Press, 2008.

³³ Lukito, Ratno. *Legal Pluralism in Indonesia*. 0 ed., Routledge, 2012. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203113134>.

³⁴ Lowry, Joseph Edmund. *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risala of Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-fīṭī*. 2007. Brill.

³⁵ Mostert, Thomas. "Manjusha Kuruppath. Staging Asia: The Dutch East India Company and the Amsterdam Theatre. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2017. 282 Pp. ISBN: 9789087282578. \$55.00." *Itinerario*, vol. 41, no. 3, Desember 2017, hlm. 630–32. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S016511531700078X>.

³⁶ Afrianty, Dina. *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh*. 1 ed., Routledge, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744568>.

³⁷ Huis, Stijn Cornelis van. *Islamic Courts and Women's Divorce Rights in Indonesia: The Cases of Cianjur and Bulukumba*. Wührmann, 2015. E. M. Meijers Instituut Voor Rechtswetenschappelijk Onderzoek, MI 251.

deliberation before taking the case to formal court. In this practice, Islamic inheritance law is not always applied textually but is negotiated with considerations of social justice and family harmony.³⁸

This pattern shows that the practice of Islamic family law in Aceh is multi-layered and negotiated, where legal outcomes are not only determined by formal norms, but by the interaction between various legal systems.

Empirical Anchoring: Four Patterns of Interlegal Governance

A thematic analysis of the literature not only identifies four interlegal patterns but also shows that these patterns have been empirically documented in family law practices in Indonesia, including Aceh. Thus, interlegal governance is not merely a theoretical construct but can be observed in social practice.

Normative harmonization is evident in the integration of Islamic legal principles into the state legal system, particularly through the 1974 Marriage Law and the Compilation of Islamic Law.³⁹ Empirical studies show that Religious Court judges routinely refer to both sources in deciding family cases.⁴⁰

However, this harmonization is not mechanical. Field research by Feener (2013) in Aceh shows that the implementation of Sharia law often involves interpretations that reconcile religious norms with state regulations.⁴¹ For example, in divorce cases, judges consider not only fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) arguments, but also state administrative procedures and local social considerations. This suggests that harmonization creates dual legitimacy—both religious and legal—which strengthens the authority of decisions.

Empirical data shows that customary norms are not lost in formal legal systems, but are instead selectively accommodated. Bowen's ethnographic study in Aceh and Sumatra shows that in inheritance disputes, families often hold discussions to divide assets more "fairly" according to the social context, even though this does not fully comply with faraidh rules.⁴²

Nurlaelawati also found that judges at Religious Courts in Indonesia in some cases took local practices into account in interpreting Islamic law. For example, in the division of joint property (*marital relations*), judges can adjust decisions to the economic contributions of each party, which is not always explicit in classical Islamic legal texts.⁴³

These findings suggest that interlegality works through normative negotiation, where Islamic, customary, and state law do not compete directly, but are mutually adjusted in practice.

Jurisdictional bifurcation is one of the most evident patterns in Islamic family law practice. Formally, Religious Courts have jurisdiction over matters such as divorce,

³⁸ Bowen, John Richard. *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

³⁹ Salim, Arskal. *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748693481>.

⁴⁰ Rokhmad, Abu. "Institutions and Contributions to Islamic Law in Indonesia's Legal System." *Walisongo Law Review (Walrev)*, vol. 3, no. 1, Juni 2021, hlm. 21–44. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.21580/walrev.2021.3.1.7282>.

⁴¹ Feener, R. Michael. *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2014. Oxford Islamic Legal Studies.

⁴² Bowen, John Richard. *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁴³ Nurlaelawati, Euis. *Modernization, Tradition and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Courts*. Amsterdam University Press, 2010. ICAS Publications Series.

inheritance, and child custody. However, empirical findings indicate that in practice, dispute resolution does not always begin with these formal institutions, but often proceeds through informal mechanisms rooted in social relations and community structures.

Research by van Huis shows that women in Indonesia, including in Aceh, often attempt to resolve domestic conflicts through family, religious leaders,⁴⁴ or local mediators before taking the case to court. This finding is supported by Afrianty,⁴⁵ who noted that customary institutions and women's organizations in Aceh play a significant role in mediating family conflicts, particularly in the initial stages of dispute resolution. This practice demonstrates that family conflict resolution occurs within a broader social space, not limited to formal legal institutions.

This situation reflects a relatively clear division of functions between the various legal arenas: courts play a role in producing decisions with formal legal force, while community mechanisms serve as social resolution spaces that prioritize harmony and stability in relationships. However, this division does not always operate in a linear or harmonious manner. In some cases, the outcomes of informal mediation can differ from or even contradict court decisions, creating normative tension between demands for social justice at the community level and the formal legality enforced by the state.

Thus, jurisdictional bifurcation not only demonstrates the existence of two paths to dispute resolution but also reveals the complex dynamics of interaction between them. This pattern emphasizes that family law governance in a pluralistic context cannot be understood as a separate system, but rather as an intersecting interlegal network that has the potential to generate both normative synergy and conflict.

One of the most powerful empirical findings in this study is the practice of forum navigation, where individuals actively choose and move between various dispute resolution mechanisms. Rather than following a single, linear and fixed legal path, disputants strategically consider whether to resolve their conflict through formal courts, informal mediation, or community-based mechanisms. Studies by Bowen and van Huis show that these choices are influenced⁴⁶ by various factors, including cost, time efficiency, social stigma, and the likelihood of an expected outcome.⁴⁷

In the context of Islamic family law, this strategic consideration is evident, particularly in divorce cases. Women, for example, in many situations initially choose informal mediation to preserve their social reputation and maintain family relationships, particularly in societies where divorce is still viewed as a sensitive matter. However, when informal mechanisms fail to provide the desired outcomes—such as guaranteed maintenance or child custody—they then turn to the Religious Courts for a formal, enforceable decision.

Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that parties often shift from one forum to another when the desired outcome is not achieved. This practice reflects that dispute

⁴⁴ Huis, Stijn Cornelis van. *Islamic Courts and Women's Divorce Rights in Indonesia: The Cases of Cianjur and Bulukumba*. Wührmann, 2015. E. M. Meijers Instituut Voor Rechtswetenschappelijk Onderzoek, MI 251.

⁴⁵ Fauziyah, Yayuk. "Ulama Perempuan dan Dekonstruksi Fiqih Patriarkis." *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, vol. 5, no. 1, Januari 2014, hlm. 161. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2010.5.1.161-174>.

⁴⁶ Maloko, M. Thahir, dan Sippah Chotban. "PERLINDUNGAN HAK ASASI PEREMPUAN DALAM HUKUM ISLAM PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ISLAMIC LAW." *Jurnal Al-Ahkam: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Islam*, vol. 6, no. 1, Maret 2024, hlm. 54–68. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-ahkam.v6i1.2632>.

⁴⁷ Hassan, Rasha. "Formal Litigation or Informal Mediation." *هرمس*, vol. 12, no. 1, Januari 2023, hlm. 89–130. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.21608/herms.2023.354100>.

resolution does not occur within a single legal arena, but rather through a multi – layered pathway involving various legal spaces. In this case, the law is not only complied with but also strategically mobilized by actors as a resource to achieve specific goals.

However, the ability to navigate forums is not evenly distributed. Access to legal information, social capital, and economic resources significantly influence an individual's capacity to identify and utilize the various forums available (Tamanaha, 2017).⁴⁸ Therefore, while forum navigation may expand options for some, this practice also has the potential to reproduce structural inequalities, particularly for vulnerable groups who have limited access to the complex legal system.

This finding aligns with socio – legal perspectives that conceptualize law as a resource mobilized in everyday life. Ewick and Silbey argue that individuals engage with law not only as a system of rules but as a repertoire of strategies embedded in social relations.⁴⁹ Similarly, Sarat and Felstiner demonstrate that legal processes, particularly in family disputes, are shaped by negotiation, power, and strategic behavior rather than purely legal reasoning.⁵⁰

Table 1. Patterns of Interlegal Governance in Islamic Family Law in Aceh

Interlegal Pattern	Main Characteristics	Empirical Evidence	Legal Interaction Mechanism	Implications for Justice
Normative Harmonization	Integration of Islamic law into state law	The judge referred to the Marriage Law & KHI; the Sharia law was interpreted contextually (Cammack, 2007; Feener, 2013)	Synchronization of religious and state norms	Increases legal legitimacy, but potentially limits local flexibility
Selective Merging	Customs are accommodated in formal legal practices	Inheritance deliberations do not always follow faraidh; consideration of economic contributions to joint assets (Bowen, 2003;	Negotiations between Islamic law, custom, and state law	High flexibility, but has the potential to produce inconsistencies

⁴⁸ Smith, Andrew Christopher. "Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States Edited by Charles L.Cohen and Ronald L.Numbers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013 ISBN 978 – 0 – 19 – 993192 – 7. 386 Pages. \$36.95 (Paperback)." *The Muslim World*, vol. 107, no. 3, Juli 2017, hlm. 604 – 06. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12203>.

⁴⁹ Silbey, Susan S. *The Common Place of Law: Stories from Everyday Life*. Disunting oleh Patricia Ewick, University of Chicago Press, 1998. Language and Legal Discourse.

⁵⁰ Sarat, Austin, dan William L. F. Felstiner. *Divorce Lawyers and Their Clients: Power and Meaning in the Legal Process*. Oxford University Press New York, NY, 1995. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195063875.001.0001>.

Jurisdictional Bifurcation	Division of functions between the courts and the community	of Disputes are resolved through the family/customs before going to court (van Huis, 2017; Afrianty, 2015)	Arena dualism: formal (legal) vs informal (social)	Speeding up resolution, but potentially creating a conflict between legality and social justice
Forum Navigation	Strategic selection of forums by actors	Women choose mediation or court depending on the goal (Bowen, 2003; van Huis, 2017)	Cross – forum movement (forum shopping)	Expanding choice, but reinforcing inequalities of access for vulnerable groups

Institutional Actors and the Production of Legal Authority

The findings of this study also show that legal authority in interlegal systems is not singular, but rather produced through the interaction of various actors.⁵¹ Judges, religious scholars, traditional leaders, and even disputants have roles in determining how the law is applied.⁵²

In the Acehnese context, Religious Court judges not only apply positive law but also consider social norms and religious values in their decision – making.⁵³ Meanwhile, traditional leaders act as mediators, prioritizing social harmony over formal legality.⁵⁴

This demonstrates that legal authority is distributed, not a single hierarchy. In other words, law is produced through social practices, not just formal institutions.

Interlegality and Legal Outcomes: Variation and Uncertainty

One important implication of interlegality is the variation in legal outcomes. Because disputes can be resolved through various channels, the outcomes obtained are not always consistent.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Von Benda – Beckmann, Franz. "Who's Afraid of Legal Pluralism?" The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law, vol. 34, no. 47, Januari 2002, hlm. 37 – 82. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.2002.10756563>.

⁵² Holzman – Gazit, Yifat. Land Expropriation in Israel: Law, Culture, and Society. Ashgate, 2007. Law, Justice and Power Series.

⁵³ Nurlaelawati, Euis. Modernization, Tradition and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Courts. Amsterdam University Press, 2010. ICAS Publications Series.

⁵⁴ Manan, Abdul. "PENEMUAN HUKUM OLEH HAKIM DALAM PRAKTEK HUKUM ACARA DI PERADILAN AGAMA." Jurnal Hukum dan Peradilan, vol. 2, no. 2, Juli 2013, hlm. 189. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.25216/jhp.2.2.2013.189–202>.

⁵⁵ De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. "Law: A Map of Misreading. Toward a Postmodern Conception of Law." Journal of Law and Society, vol. 14, no. 3, 1987, hlm. 279. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410186>.

For example, in child custody cases, court decisions may differ from the results of family mediation.⁵⁶ Courts tend to use formal legal standards, while mediation considers social relationships and family interests.⁵⁷

This variation demonstrates that interlegality provides flexibility but also poses challenges to legal certainty. In this context, law is no longer deterministic, but contextual and situational.

Implications for Vulnerable Groups: Gender and Access to Justice

The most significant finding of this research is that interlegality has direct implications for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. In pluralistic legal systems, access to justice is unequal because it depends on an individual's ability to navigate various legal systems.⁵⁸

This concern is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic family law, where gender relations play a central role in shaping access to justice. Studies on Muslim family law have shown that legal outcomes are often influenced not only by formal doctrines but also by broader socio-cultural expectations regarding gender roles.⁵⁹ In this regard, interlegality may create opportunities for legal maneuvering, but it can also reinforce structural inequalities when social norms constrain the choices available to women.⁶⁰

In some cases, informal mediation can be detrimental to women due to social pressure to maintain the marriage or accept unfair compromises. However, in other cases, interlegality actually provides space for women to choose a more favorable forum.⁶¹

These findings suggest that interlegality is ambivalent, expanding access to justice but also reinforcing inequality. Thus, interlegality is not normatively neutral, but has consequences for the distribution of justice.⁶²

DISCUSSION

This research begins with a critique of the tendency of legal pluralism studies to be descriptive and inadequate in explaining the dynamics of interactions between legal systems. The research findings show that in the Acehnese context, particularly in Islamic family law, legal pluralism not only presents a diversity of norms but also creates a complex interaction space between state law, Islamic law, and customary law. This

⁵⁶ Tucker, Judith E. *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*. 1st ed, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Themes in Islamic Law 3.

⁵⁷ Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. *Marriage on Trial: Islamic Family Law in Iran and Morocco*. I.B. Tauris, 2011.

⁵⁸ Leveque, Kate, dan Anne Cartwright. "Navigate Various Legal Issues Surrounding Workforce Reductions." *Campus Legal Advisor*, vol. 19, no. 4, Desember 2018, hlm. 1–5. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1002/cala.30915>.

⁵⁹ Stockreiter, Elke E. *Islamic Law, Gender, and Social Change in Post-Abolition Zanzibar*. Cambridge University Press, 2015. Lombardi, Clark. *State Law as Islamic Law in Modern Egypt: The Incorporation of the Shari'a into Egyptian Constitutional Law*. BRILL, 2006. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047404729>.

⁶⁰ Welchman, Lynn, editor. *Women and Muslim Family Laws in Arab States: A Comparative Overview of Textual Development and Advocacy*. Amsterdam University Press, 2010. ISIM Series on Contemporary Muslim Societies.

⁶¹ Noviyanti, Ririn. "Book Review: 'Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia.'" *MAQASHID Jurnal Hukum Islam*, vol. 1, no. 1, Agustus 2018, hlm. 19–37. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.35897/maqashid.v1i1.123>.

⁶² Hefner, Robert W. *Shari'a Politics: Islamic Law and Society in the Modern World*. Indiana University Press, 2011.

confirms that legal pluralism, as formulated by Griffiths,⁶³ while important as a starting point for analysis, is insufficient to explain how law operates in social practice.

Thus, this study confirms and expands on Merry's critique⁶⁴ that legal pluralism needs to be understood not merely as a structural condition but as a social process. In this context, interlegality—as developed by Santos (1987)—provides a more adequate analytical framework because it focuses on interaction, not simply coexistence.⁶⁵ The findings of this study demonstrate that law in Aceh does not operate within the confines of a rigid system, but rather through a process of negotiation involving various actors and norms.

In other words, this research shows that the shift from legal pluralism to interlegality is not simply a change in terminology, but an epistemological reorientation: from viewing law as a structure to understanding law as a relational practice.⁶⁶

From a broader theoretical perspective,⁶⁷ this shift toward interlegality resonates with contemporary debates in global legal theory, which emphasize the fragmentation and interaction of legal authority beyond the state.⁶⁸ These approaches highlight that legal authority is no longer centralized but dispersed across multiple overlapping normative orders, reinforcing the relevance of interlegal governance as an analytical framework.

One of the main contributions of this research is the development of the concept of interlegal governance as an analytical lens for understanding the governance of Islamic family law. Unlike normative approaches that view law as a system of rules applied linearly, this research's findings demonstrate that law is actually produced through social interactions between various actors.

Within this framework, Religious Court judges not only apply positive law but also consider social norms and religious values.⁶⁹ Similarly, traditional leaders act as mediators who promote social harmony, which in many cases serves as an alternative to formal resolution.⁷⁰ This aligns with Galanter's (1981) argument about "justice in many rooms," which asserts that law is not only produced in the courtroom but also in various other social spaces.⁷¹

⁶³ Griffiths, John. "What Is Legal Pluralism?" *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol. 18, no. 24, Januari 1986, hlm. 1–55. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>.

⁶⁴ Engle Merry, Sally. "Legal Pluralism." *Law & Society Review*, vol. 22, no. 5, 1988, hlm. 869–96. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>.

⁶⁵ De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. "Law: A Map of Misreading. Toward a Postmodern Conception of Law." *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1987, hlm. 279. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410186>.

⁶⁶ Chan, Cora. "From Legal Pluralism to Dual State: Evolution of the Relationship between the Chinese and Hong Kong Legal Orders." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2022. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4288387>.

⁶⁷ Roughan, Nicole. *Authorities: Conflicts, Cooperation, and Transnational Legal Theory*. First published in paperback, Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁶⁸ Krisch, Nico. *Beyond Constitutionalism: The Pluralist Structure of Postnational Law*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011. Oxford Constitutional Theory Ser.

⁶⁹ Nurlaelawati, Euis. *Modernization, Tradition and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Courts*. Amsterdam University Press, 2010. ICAS Publications Series.

⁷⁰ Afrianty, Dina. *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh*. 1 ed., Routledge, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744568>.

⁷¹ Galanter, Marc. "Justice in Many Rooms: Courts, Private Ordering, and Indigenous Law." *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol. 13, no. 19, Januari 1981, hlm. 1–47. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1981.10756257>.

Thus, interlegal governance can be understood as a mechanism in which legal authority is distributed, legal decisions are contextual and legal practices are the result of interactions between norms and actors. This approach broadens the understanding of law as a dynamic social practice, as emphasized by Cotterrell.⁷²

Table 2. Interlegal Governance Framework

Element	Main Components	Analytical Meaning
Norm	State – Islam – Custom	Intersecting sources of law
Actor	Judge – Customary Law – Parties	The perpetrator who activates the law
Interaction	Negotiation – Mediation – Strategy	The social process of law formation
Governance	Distributed authority	There is no single authority
Output	Decision – Agreement	Contextual legal results

Findings regarding forum navigation indicate that individuals in pluralistic legal systems are not passive, but have the capacity to choose the dispute resolution pathway they deem most beneficial. In the Acehnese context, the choice between religious courts, customary mediation, or family negotiations is based not only on legal norms but also on social and strategic considerations.

However, this research shows that the ability to navigate forums is not evenly distributed. Individuals with access to resources—whether economic, social, or legal knowledge—have a greater advantage in determining which forum to use. This strengthens Tamanaha's (2017) argument that legal pluralism can lead to inequality in access to justice.⁷³

Thus, interlegality not only creates flexibility but also introduces a political dimension into legal practice. The choice of forum is not simply a matter of procedure, but part of a strategy that reflects power relations in society.

This research identifies interlegality as normatively ambivalent. On the one hand, interlegality allows for flexibility in dispute resolution and allows for more contextual solutions. On the other hand, this flexibility can lead to legal uncertainty and inconsistent outcomes.

In the context of Islamic family law, this ambivalence is evident in the practice of resolving inheritance and divorce disputes. For example, inheritance distribution often does not strictly follow faraidh rules but is adapted to the family's social circumstances.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, in divorce cases, informal mediation can expedite resolution, but also has the potential to pressure certain parties to accept compromise.⁷⁵

⁷² Cotterrell, Roger. *Law, Culture and Society: Legal Ideas in the Mirror of Social Theory*. Routledge, 2016.

⁷³ Tamanaha, Brian Z. *Legal Pluralism Explained: History, Theory, Consequences*. Oxford university press, 2021.

⁷⁴ McKinlay, John B., dkk. "The Relative Contributions of Endocrine Changes and Social Circumstances to Depression in Mid – Aged Women." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 28, no. 4, Desember 1987, hlm. 345. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2136789>.

⁷⁵ Figueras Bates, Carolina. "Conflict Resolution in Online Mental Health Support Groups: The Role of Empathy and Informal Mediation." *Language and Dialogue*, vol. 14, no. 2, Agustus 2024, hlm. 239 – 67. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1075/ld.00171.fig>.

This finding aligns with the arguments of Mir–Hosseini and Tucker that Islamic family law in practice is often a negotiation between formal norms and social realities. Thus, interlegality cannot be understood as a neutral mechanism but must be viewed in the context of its impact on justice.⁷⁶

One of the most significant findings is that interlegality has direct implications for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. In a pluralistic legal system, access to justice is determined not only by legal norms but also by an individual's ability to navigate various legal systems.

In some cases, interlegality provides space for women to seek justice through different forums. However, in many situations, social pressures and power imbalances limit these options. For example, women facing divorce are often encouraged to resolve disputes informally to maintain family harmony, even though this is not always legally advantageous.⁷⁷

These findings suggest that interlegality operates within broader structures of social inequality. Therefore, analyses of interlegality must always consider the dimensions of power and vulnerability. Without this perspective, interlegality risks being understood as a mechanism that expands choice, while in practice it can actually narrow access to justice for certain groups (Hefner, 2011).

From a normative standpoint, these findings are consistent with broader global concerns regarding access to justice. Reports such as UN Women (2011) emphasize that legal pluralism can both enable and constrain justice, depending on how institutional and social inequalities are addressed. Therefore, interlegality must be analyzed not only as a descriptive phenomenon but also as a site of contestation over justice and rights.⁷⁸

Theoretically, this research develops a relational socio–legal approach by positioning law as the result of interactions between actors, institutions, and social contexts. Within this framework, law is no longer understood as an autonomous and stable system of norms, but rather as a dynamic, pluralistic, and unpredictable process. These findings emphasize that legal practices are shaped through social negotiation, not solely through the application of formal rules.

This approach simultaneously strengthens and expands the concept of interlegality by demonstrating that interactions between legal systems produce a specific form of governance: interlegal governance. In this model, legal authority is not centralized in a single institution but distributed among various actors and social arenas. This shifts the understanding of law from a hierarchical system to a complex network of interactions.

From a normative perspective, this research demonstrates that interlegality has direct implications for justice. Flexibility in a pluralistic system does indeed open up space for various legal strategies, but at the same time, it also creates unequal access, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children. Thus, interlegality cannot be understood as a neutral mechanism, but rather as an arena fraught with power relations.

⁷⁶ Mir–Hosseini, Ziba. *Marriage on Trial: Islamic Family Law in Iran and Morocco*. I.B. Tauris, 2011.

⁷⁷ Afrianty, Dina. *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh*. 1 ed., Routledge, 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744568>. Associate Professor of the Department of Civil Procedure of the Saratov State Law Academy, PhD (Law), dan Irina N. Balashova. "From an Idea to a Concept: New Vectors for the Development of Alternative Ways to Resolve Disputes." *Arbitrazh – Civil Procedure*, November 2024, hlm. 45–48. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.18572/1812-383X-2024-12-45-48>.

⁷⁸ Entitā des Nations Unies pour l'ġgalitā des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes, editor. *Progress of the World's Women 2011–2012: In Pursuit of Justice*. United Nations, 2011.

The policy implications of these findings emphasize that legal reform in pluralistic contexts cannot focus solely on formal regulatory changes. Instead, reform must consider interlegal practices on the ground, including the role of local actors and informal mechanisms. Without this approach, legal policies risk being ineffective or even reinforcing existing inequalities.

Thus, this study answers the central question: interlegality shapes the governance of Islamic family law through dynamic interactions between legal systems, resulting in contextual, yet not always consistent, decisions that have direct implications for justice. The primary contribution of this study lies not in the mere use of the concept of interlegality, but in its development as an analytical tool capable of explaining legal practice in greater depth. Through the concept of interlegal governance, this study successfully transcends the descriptive approach of legal pluralism and offers a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding law in a pluralistic society..

Table 3. Relational Socio – Legal Framework and Its Implications

Dimensions	Key Findings	Analytical Contribution	Practical Implications
Theoretical	Law as a result of interaction (actor – institution – context)	Shifting law from normative system → relational practice	Opening up new approaches in socio – legal studies
Legal Character	Dynamic, plural, non – predictive	Rejecting the assumption of static and single laws	A flexible approach is needed in legal analysis.
Interlegal Governance	Distributed and interaction – based authority	Developing the concept of interlegal governance	Reforms are not sufficiently based on formal regulations
Implications of Justice	Unequal access impacts vulnerable groups	Interlegality is normative (not neutral)	The need to protect vulnerable groups
Legal Policy	Practice is more decisive than formal rules	Connecting law with social reality	Integration of informal mechanisms and local actors
Study Contribution	Interlegality as an analytical tool, not a label	Expanding legal pluralism towards interaction	Relevant for legal reform in plural societies

This table summarizes the research's key contributions by demonstrating an analytical shift from law as a normative system to law as a relational practice shaped through interaction. This framework emphasizes that interlegal governance not only extends the theory of legal pluralism but also has direct implications for justice and legal reform, particularly in the context of plural societies involving vulnerable groups.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to answer the main question: how interlegality shapes the governance of Islamic family law in Aceh, and what its implications are for justice, particularly for vulnerable groups. Based on a socio – legal analysis based on a literature synthesis, this study shows that Islamic family law in Aceh does not operate within a single legal system, but rather within an interlegal space where state law, Islamic law, and customary law interact dynamically.

The main findings of this study confirm that legal pluralism, as understood within the conventional framework, is insufficient to explain legal practices in Aceh. Although legal pluralism is able to identify the existence of multiple legal systems, this approach tends to be descriptive and unable to capture the dynamics of interactions between legal systems in practice. Therefore, this study demonstrates that the interlegality approach provides a more adequate analytical framework because it focuses on the processes of interaction, negotiation, and movement of actors across multiple legal systems.

Furthermore, this research develops the concept of interlegal governance as a key contribution, namely a way of understanding legal governance as a result of the interaction between various norms and actors. Within this framework, law is no longer understood as a system that operates in a linear and hierarchical manner, but as a social practice formed through negotiations between formal courts, customary mechanisms, and religious norms. These findings demonstrate that legal decisions in the context of Islamic family law in Aceh are contextual, dependent on the interaction between legal systems and the strategies of the actors involved.

This research also shows that interlegality has direct implications for justice. On the one hand, interlegality provides flexibility and opens up space for dispute resolution that is more contextual and responsive to social conditions. However, on the other hand, this flexibility can also create legal uncertainty and reinforce unequal access to justice. In this context, vulnerable groups—particularly women and children—are often at a disadvantage due to limitations in accessing and navigating various legal systems.

Thus, this research confirms that interlegality is not a neutral mechanism, but has normative consequences for the distribution of justice. Therefore, analysis of interlegality must always consider the dimensions of power, social inequality, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Theoretically, this study contributes by reconstructing the relationship between legal pluralism and interlegality. It demonstrates that interlegality not only complements legal pluralism but also expands it by shifting the focus from coexistence to interaction. Methodologically, this study also demonstrates that systematic literature synthesis can yield new insights into legal practice, even without primary empirical data.

Practically, the findings of this study have implications for legal reform in Indonesia, particularly in the context of Aceh. Legal reform cannot focus solely on formal regulatory changes but must also consider the interlegal dynamics that occur in practice. Furthermore, legal policies need to be designed to ensure that flexibility within a pluralistic legal system does not compromise substantive justice, particularly for vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, this study confirms that understanding law in a pluralistic society requires an approach that considers not only the diversity of legal systems but also the interactions between them. By developing the concept of interlegal governance, this study provides a new perspective in socio-legal studies and opens up space for further, more empirical research to test and deepen these findings in a broader context.

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DECLARATIONS

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Mokhammad Samson Fajar contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study, development of the theoretical framework, literature collection and review, data analysis and interpretation, and led the drafting of the manuscript. Ahmad Rajafi contributed to the refinement of the theoretical framework, analysis of Islamic family law and legal pluralism, interpretation of findings, and manuscript revision. Abdul Qodir Zaelani contributed to the critical review of the manuscript, validation of the analytical framework, and substantive revision of the article. All authors reviewed, approved, and agreed to the final version of the manuscript and take full responsibility for its content.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this study are derived from publicly available academic literature, books, journal articles, legal documents, and other secondary sources cited in the manuscript. No new primary dataset was generated during this study. All supporting materials are available through the references listed in the article or from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or non – financial interests, personal relationships, organizational affiliations, or other circumstances that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The authors further confirm that the study was conducted independently and that the interpretation of the findings was not influenced by any external party.

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