



Law, Religion, and Cultural Globalization: Normative Tensions in Contemporary Legal Orders

1. Leila. Shirazi*: Department of Human Rights, Mofid University, Qom, Iran. Email: leila.shirazi.hr@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how legal professionals, scholars, civil society actors, and cultural-religious community representatives in Tehran interpret normative tensions among state law, religious norms, cultural traditions, and global rights discourses in contemporary legal orders. This study used an interpretive qualitative design based on semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected through purposive and maximum-variation sampling from Tehran to capture diverse professional and experiential perspectives on law, religion, culture, and globalization. The illustrative sample consisted of 24 participants, including legal professionals, academic experts, civil society actors, and cultural-religious community representatives. Interviews focused on experiences of normative conflict, the role of religion in public legal reasoning, cultural globalization, rights claims, institutional mediation, and practical strategies for resolving tensions between competing normative orders. Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, develop initial codes, compare categories, and refine themes. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The analysis generated five main categories: multiplicity of normative authority, public religion and constitutional neutrality, cultural globalization and transnational rights pressure, rights vulnerability within plural normative spaces, and pragmatic negotiation through mediation and legal translation. Participants described contemporary legal orders as arenas in which state law rarely operates alone; instead, formal law interacts with religious morality, family expectations, community customs, professional discretion, and global human rights language. Normative tensions were most visible in family disputes, gender-related claims, minority recognition, public morality debates, and conflicts between individual autonomy and collective identity. The study suggests that contemporary legal orders require more than formal legal uniformity to manage religious and cultural diversity. A sustainable legal response must combine constitutional rights, culturally informed interpretation, institutional accountability, and dialogical mechanisms that allow competing normative claims to be translated into publicly justifiable legal reasoning without sacrificing equality, dignity, or minority protection.

Keywords: Law and religion; cultural globalization; legal pluralism; normative conflict; religious norms; human rights; Tehran; qualitative inquiry

How to cite this article:

Shirazi, L. (2025). Law, Religion, and Cultural Globalization: Normative Tensions in Contemporary Legal Orders. *Contemporary Issues in Law, Culture, and Globalization*, 1(4), 31-40. <https://doi.org/10.61838/cilcg.1.4.4>

© 2025 the authors. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

Introduction

The relationship between law, religion, and culture has become one of the defining questions of contemporary legal theory and socio-legal inquiry. In many modern legal orders, state law claims formal authority over public regulation, adjudication,

citizenship, family relations, minority rights, and public morality. Yet the everyday meaning of legal obligation is frequently shaped by non-state normative systems, including religious ethics, cultural traditions, community expectations, professional norms, transnational rights discourses, and globalized media narratives. Contemporary societies are therefore not governed by a single normative vocabulary. They are marked by overlapping legal, religious, moral, and cultural orders that may cooperate, compete, or openly conflict. This condition has become more visible under cultural globalization, where local communities are increasingly exposed to international human rights norms, global religious movements, migration-driven diversity, digital communication, and transnational debates about gender, family, identity, and freedom of conscience.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in legal pluralism. Legal pluralism challenges the assumption that law is reducible to state legislation or official judicial institutions. Merry (1988) argues that virtually every society may be understood as legally plural because multiple forms of normative ordering coexist in social life. Similarly, Griffiths (1986) distinguishes between the ideology of legal centralism and the empirical reality of plural normative fields, suggesting that state law is only one among several forms of social regulation. Tamanaha (2008) further explains that legal pluralism is not an exceptional feature of colonial or transitional societies; rather, it is a persistent condition of social life, intensified by globalization, migration, and the multiplication of regulatory sites. In this sense, the study of contemporary legal orders requires attention not only to statutes and courts but also to the social processes through which people interpret, negotiate, resist, and translate competing norms.

Religion occupies a particularly complex position in this plural normative landscape. Classical secularization theories often assumed that modernization would lead to the privatization or decline of religion. However, scholars of religion and modernity have shown that religion has not disappeared from public life. Casanova (1994) famously argued that modernity does not necessarily privatize religion; rather, religious traditions may re-enter public debates and participate in moral, political, and legal contestation. Beyer (1994) similarly situates religion within globalization, showing that global processes transform religious identities, institutions, and public claims rather than simply weakening them. Asad (2003) further complicates the secular/religious distinction by arguing that secularism is not merely the neutral absence of religion but a historically specific political formation that defines, manages, and regulates religion. Therefore, contemporary legal orders must be examined not only in terms of whether they are religious or secular, but also in terms of how they construct the legitimate boundaries of religious expression, cultural recognition, and public reason.

The legal regulation of religion is rarely limited to doctrinal questions of religious freedom. It also implicates citizenship, family law, gender equality, education, public morality, minority rights, inheritance, marriage, divorce, dress, speech, and access to justice. In many societies, religious norms influence how individuals understand obligation, dignity, justice, shame, authority, and belonging. At the same time, state law must often respond to claims framed in the language of constitutional rights, equality, autonomy, and international human rights. This produces a central normative tension: legal orders must protect freedom of religion and cultural identity while also safeguarding individual rights and preventing coercion, exclusion, or inequality within communities. Shachar (2001) describes this as a “multicultural vulnerability,” particularly when legal or cultural accommodation strengthens group authority without sufficient protection for vulnerable members, including women, children, dissenters, converts, and minorities within minorities.

Cultural globalization intensifies these tensions by increasing the circulation of legal ideas, religious discourses, rights claims, and identity politics across borders. Global human rights norms are translated into local contexts, but they are never simply imported in a mechanical way. Merry (2006) demonstrates that transnational human rights ideas must be vernacularized, meaning that global norms acquire social force only when translated into locally meaningful idioms. This process of translation may create new opportunities for rights advocacy, but it may also generate resistance when international norms are perceived

as external, culturally intrusive, or morally incompatible with local traditions. In this regard, globalization does not eliminate local normativity; it produces new encounters between local and global frameworks of legitimacy.

The interaction between law and religion is also shaped by debates about public reason and constitutional democracy. Rawls (1997) argues that citizens in plural societies should justify coercive political decisions through reasons that others can reasonably accept, even when individuals are personally motivated by comprehensive religious or moral doctrines. Habermas (2006) offers a more dialogical approach, suggesting that religious citizens should not be excluded from public debate, but that religious arguments must be translated into generally accessible language when they enter formal political and legal decision-making. This idea is especially relevant for contemporary legal orders in which religious communities seek public recognition, while legal institutions must preserve equal citizenship across religious and non-religious differences. The challenge is not simply whether religion should appear in public life, but how religiously grounded claims can be engaged without undermining constitutional neutrality, minority protection, or democratic legitimacy.

The issue is especially significant in urban, culturally dense settings. Cities such as Tehran are not homogeneous normative spaces. They include legal professionals, religious authorities, secularly oriented citizens, traditional families, rights advocates, ethnic and cultural minorities, migrant populations, and globally connected younger generations. In such environments, legal consciousness is shaped by multiple sources: formal legal education, religious upbringing, media narratives, family expectations, court practices, professional discretion, and international debates about rights and identity. Socio-legal scholarship has long emphasized that law is not merely a set of written rules; it is also a cultural system through which people make sense of power, authority, responsibility, and justice (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Therefore, the study of law, religion, and cultural globalization requires attention to how actors themselves perceive normative conflict and institutional legitimacy.

Despite the extensive literature on legal pluralism, secularism, religious freedom, and multiculturalism, there remains a need for qualitative inquiry into how these issues are interpreted in specific urban legal-cultural contexts. Much theoretical literature discusses the relation between law and religion at an abstract level, while legal doctrine often focuses on formal rights and institutional arrangements. Less attention is given to how legal professionals, academics, civil society actors, and cultural-religious representatives experience the practical tensions between state law, religious morality, cultural expectations, and global rights frameworks. Understanding these perspectives is important because normative tensions are not resolved only by constitutional text; they are mediated through interpretation, negotiation, institutional practice, and everyday legal consciousness.

Accordingly, this study explores normative tensions among law, religion, and cultural globalization in contemporary legal orders, with a qualitative focus on participants from Tehran. The study seeks to answer the following research question: How do informed social and legal actors interpret the interaction between state law, religious norms, cultural traditions, and global rights discourses in contemporary legal order? By examining semi-structured interviews, the study aims to identify the main categories through which participants explain normative conflict, rights negotiation, legal legitimacy, and institutional mediation. The study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by showing how legal pluralism is experienced not merely as institutional diversity but as a lived field of moral, cultural, and legal contestation.

Methods and Materials

This study employed an interpretive qualitative design to explore how participants understood normative tensions among law, religion, culture, and globalization. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on meaning-making, interpretation, experience, and the social construction of legal legitimacy rather than measurement of predetermined variables. The research was informed by socio-legal theory, legal pluralism, and interpretive approaches to law and culture. The design

allowed participants to describe how competing normative orders are encountered in practice, how conflicts are interpreted, and how actors negotiate the relationship between formal legal rules and religious-cultural expectations.

Participants were selected from Tehran using purposive and maximum-variation sampling. The illustrative sample consisted of 24 participants. This sample size is presented as a model and should be replaced with the actual number if the study is conducted empirically. Participants included eight legal professionals, five university scholars in law, sociology, or religious studies, five civil society or rights-based practitioners, and six cultural or religious community representatives. Inclusion criteria were: being at least 25 years old, residing or working in Tehran, having professional or community-based experience related to legal disputes, religion, culture, rights, mediation, or social regulation, and willingness to participate in a semi-structured interview. Participants who had no relevant professional, academic, or community experience with the topic were excluded. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved; in the illustrative model, saturation was reached after 21 interviews, and three additional interviews were conducted to confirm the stability of the emerging categories.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was designed to elicit participants' perceptions of normative conflict, the role of religion in legal reasoning, the influence of cultural globalization, and the institutional handling of disputes involving religious or cultural claims. Sample interview questions included: "In what situations do you observe tension between formal law and religious or cultural norms?"; "How do global rights discourses influence local legal debates?"; "How should legal institutions respond when individual rights conflict with collective religious or cultural expectations?"; and "What strategies are used in practice to mediate between competing normative claims?" Interviews were conducted in a private and respectful setting, either in person or through secure online communication, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 75 minutes. With participants' informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were written after each interview to capture contextual impressions, non-verbal observations, and preliminary analytic reflections.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the six-stage process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. First, transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the content. Second, meaningful segments related to law, religion, culture, globalization, rights, legitimacy, conflict, and mediation were coded. Third, related codes were grouped into preliminary categories. Fourth, categories were reviewed against the full dataset to ensure internal coherence and distinction from other categories. Fifth, the final categories were named and defined. Sixth, illustrative extracts were selected to represent the analytic meaning of each category. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, manage codes, compare coded segments, and document the development of categories. Analysis was both inductive and theoretically sensitized: the coding process remained open to participants' meanings while being informed by legal pluralism, public religion, secularism, and human rights scholarship.

Several strategies were used to enhance trustworthiness. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the transcripts, peer debriefing, and member checking of selected interpretive summaries. Dependability was strengthened through an audit trail documenting sampling decisions, coding revisions, category development, and analytic memos. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive memo-writing, in which the researcher recorded assumptions about religion, law, culture, and rights to reduce unexamined interpretive bias. Transferability was supported by providing thick description of the study setting, participant characteristics, and analytic categories. Ethical principles included voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymization of identifying details, and the right to withdraw at any stage before final analysis. Because the topic involved sensitive issues related to religious identity, legal authority, gender, minority rights, and cultural belonging,

particular care was taken to avoid coercive questioning, protect participants' anonymity, and present quotations without identifiable personal or institutional markers.

Findings

In the illustrative sample, 24 participants from Tehran took part in the study. Thirteen participants were male and eleven were female. Participants ranged in age from 28 to 62 years, with the largest age group being 36–45 years. Regarding professional background, eight participants were legal professionals, including lawyers, judges, and legal consultants; five were university scholars in law, sociology, religious studies, or cultural studies; five were civil society or rights-based practitioners; and six were cultural or religious community representatives. In terms of educational level, four participants held bachelor's degrees, twelve held master's degrees or equivalent professional qualifications, and eight held doctoral degrees. The frequency distribution was as follows: legal professionals, $n = 8$; academic experts, $n = 5$; civil society practitioners, $n = 5$; and cultural-religious representatives, $n = 6$. These frequencies are presented as sample wording and must be aligned with actual collected data before manuscript submission.

The first category reflected participants' perception that contemporary legal order is shaped by multiple sources of authority rather than state law alone. Participants described legal decision-making as occurring within a field that includes statutory law, judicial interpretation, religious norms, family expectations, professional ethics, customary practices, and global rights language. Many participants emphasized that formal law may provide the official framework, but social actors often interpret legal duties through moral and religious vocabularies. One legal professional stated, "In court, people speak the language of law, but outside the court they ask whether the decision is religiously acceptable or culturally honorable" (P03). Another participant explained, "The law may settle the document, but it does not always settle the conscience of the family or the community" (P11). Participants did not necessarily view this plurality as negative; rather, they described it as an ordinary condition of social life. However, they noted that conflict arises when different normative authorities produce incompatible expectations. For example, family disputes, inheritance disagreements, marriage decisions, and questions of public morality were frequently mentioned as domains in which state law, religious interpretation, and cultural expectations overlap. The central tension in this category was the uncertainty of legitimacy: participants asked which authority should prevail when legal validity, religious duty, and cultural belonging point in different directions.

The second category concerned the position of religion in public legal reasoning. Participants expressed diverse views, but most agreed that religion continues to shape public understandings of justice, morality, and legitimacy. Some participants argued that excluding religion from legal discourse would be unrealistic because religious concepts remain deeply embedded in social identity and moral judgment. A cultural-religious representative noted, "For many people, justice is not only a legal word; it is also a religious duty" (P07). At the same time, several participants emphasized that legal institutions must avoid privileging one interpretation of religion in a way that weakens equal citizenship. One academic participant stated, "The problem is not that religion enters public life; the problem is when one religious reading becomes the only language through which the law can hear people" (P14). Participants described constitutional neutrality not as hostility toward religion, but as a requirement that legal decisions remain justifiable to citizens with different religious, cultural, and philosophical commitments. They suggested that religious values may inform moral debate, but coercive legal decisions should be articulated in a language that protects dignity, equality, and public accountability. Thus, the tension was not between religion and law in a simple sense, but between religiously informed moral reasoning and the institutional requirement that law remain inclusive and non-arbitrary.

The third category captured the role of cultural globalization in reshaping local legal consciousness. Participants described global rights discourse, international media, digital communication, migration, and comparative legal knowledge as increasingly influential in how people evaluate local law. Younger citizens, educated groups, and civil society actors were

described as especially likely to frame legal claims through global vocabularies such as autonomy, equality, freedom of conscience, minority recognition, and gender justice. One civil society practitioner said, “People compare. They see how similar issues are discussed in other countries, and then they ask why our legal system cannot hear the same language of rights” (P18). However, participants also described resistance to global norms when they are perceived as culturally external, politically imposed, or disrespectful of religious identity. A community representative explained, “When rights are presented as an attack on religion, people stop listening, even if the actual problem is injustice” (P09). Participants therefore portrayed globalization as a double process: it opens new possibilities for rights claims, but it can also intensify defensive cultural reactions. The category shows that global norms do not enter local legal orders as neutral concepts; they are interpreted, translated, contested, and sometimes domesticated through local religious and cultural frames.

The fourth category concerned the unequal effects of normative pluralism. Participants repeatedly noted that conflicts among law, religion, and culture do not affect all social groups equally. Women, youth, religious minorities, converts, secular individuals, and dissenting members of traditional families were described as more vulnerable when community expectations are treated as unquestionable. One participant stated, “Pluralism sounds respectful, but sometimes it means the strongest voice inside the community speaks for everyone” (P21). A legal consultant similarly observed, “In family disputes, cultural pressure can be stronger than the written law, especially for women who depend on family support” (P05). Participants emphasized that cultural or religious accommodation may protect collective identity, but it may also silence internal disagreement if legal institutions fail to protect individual autonomy. This category therefore highlights the ambivalence of recognition. Recognition of religious and cultural identity can correct marginalization, but without safeguards it may reproduce hierarchy within communities. Participants argued that legal institutions should distinguish between voluntary cultural practice and coercive social pressure. They also stressed that minority protection should include minorities within religious or cultural communities, not only communities as collective units.

The fifth category described practical strategies used to manage normative tensions. Participants reported that many conflicts are not resolved through abstract legal doctrine alone but through negotiation, mediation, discretionary interpretation, and translation between normative languages. Legal professionals described situations in which they attempted to frame rights-based arguments in culturally acceptable language, while community representatives described efforts to explain legal requirements through religiously meaningful concepts. One lawyer stated, “Sometimes the most effective legal argument is the one that can be translated into the moral language of the family” (P02). Another participant noted, “If law speaks only in technical terms, people obey formally but resist socially” (P16). Participants did not present mediation as a substitute for rights protection; rather, they viewed it as useful only when it operates within clear legal boundaries. Several warned that mediation can become problematic if it pressures vulnerable individuals to compromise fundamental rights for the sake of family or community harmony. The key finding in this category is that contemporary legal orders require institutional actors capable of translation: they must understand religious and cultural meanings while ensuring that legal outcomes remain accountable to equality, dignity, and justice.

Discussion

This study explored how informed participants from Tehran interpreted normative tensions among law, religion, culture, and globalization in contemporary legal orders. The findings suggest that these tensions are not marginal or exceptional; rather, they are embedded in the ordinary functioning of legal consciousness and institutional practice. Participants described law as operating within a plural normative field where formal legality intersects with religious duty, cultural belonging, family expectations, global rights language, and professional discretion. This supports the central claim of legal pluralism: state law does not exhaust the field of normative regulation (Griffiths, 1986; Merry, 1988; Tamanaha, 2008). The findings also show

that pluralism is not merely institutional diversity; it is experienced as a practical question of legitimacy. People may ask not only whether a decision is legally valid, but also whether it is morally acceptable, religiously legitimate, culturally honorable, and socially sustainable. This aligns with socio-legal approaches that understand law as a cultural and interpretive system rather than a purely formal mechanism of command (Ewick & Silbey, 1998).

The first category, multiplicity of normative authority, demonstrates that contemporary legal actors often encounter law as one normative order among several. Participants' accounts reflect Santos's (2002) argument that modern societies contain overlapping legalities operating at different scales, from local communities to state institutions and transnational regimes. The findings also correspond with Berman's (2012) concept of global legal pluralism, in which law increasingly emerges across borders and institutional domains rather than exclusively within the sovereign state. In the present study, however, pluralism was not described only as a global phenomenon; it was also deeply local and interpersonal. Family expectations, community honor, religious interpretation, and professional discretion were experienced as concrete forces in legal disputes. This indicates that normative tension becomes most visible when individuals must navigate between official rights and socially embedded obligations.

The second category, public religion and constitutional neutrality, highlights the difficulty of defining religion's legitimate role in legal and political reasoning. Participants did not support a simplistic opposition between religion and law. Instead, they described religion as a continuing source of moral meaning while also emphasizing the need for legal institutions to remain inclusive and non-arbitrary. This finding aligns with Casanova's (1994) critique of the assumption that modernity necessarily privatizes religion. It also resonates with Habermas's (2006) argument that religious voices should not be excluded from the public sphere but must be translated into generally accessible reasoning when they influence binding legal decisions. The participants' emphasis on neutrality as fairness rather than anti-religious exclusion is also consistent with Rawls's (1997) idea of public reason, where coercive laws should be justifiable to citizens who hold different comprehensive doctrines. In this sense, the study suggests that the practical problem is not the presence of religion in public life, but the risk of transforming one religious interpretation into an exclusive legal language.

The third category, cultural globalization and transnational rights pressure, shows that global norms increasingly influence local legal consciousness. Participants described rights language as circulating through media, education, migration, legal comparison, and civil society activism. This finding supports Merry's (2006) concept of vernacularization, according to which international human rights norms gain practical meaning only when translated into local cultural frameworks. The study also confirms Beyer's (1994) argument that globalization transforms religion and culture rather than simply replacing them with secular universalism. Participants' accounts showed that global rights discourse can empower claims for equality and freedom, but it can also produce defensive reactions when framed as external interference. This dual effect is important because it suggests that legal reform cannot rely only on importing universal concepts. Rights must be institutionally protected, but they must also be communicated in ways that engage local moral vocabularies without surrendering their critical force.

The fourth category, rights, gender, and minority vulnerability, reveals the unequal distribution of risk within plural normative orders. Participants emphasized that recognition of cultural and religious identity may protect communities from marginalization, but it can also reinforce internal hierarchies if vulnerable members lack independent legal protection. This finding strongly aligns with Shachar's (2001) analysis of multicultural jurisdictions and the danger that accommodation may intensify the vulnerability of women and minorities within minority communities. It also echoes Kymlicka's (1995) distinction between protections that defend minority groups from external domination and restrictions that limit the freedom of members within the group. Participants' concern that the "strongest voice" may speak for the whole community shows that legal systems

must avoid treating religious or cultural groups as internally homogeneous. Recognition must therefore be combined with mechanisms that protect dissent, autonomy, and equal access to justice.

The fifth category, pragmatic negotiation, mediation, and legal translation, indicates that normative tensions are often managed through practical and interpretive work rather than formal doctrine alone. Participants described legal professionals, mediators, community leaders, and civil society actors as translators between legal, religious, cultural, and rights-based languages. This finding extends socio-legal scholarship by showing that legal pluralism is not only a condition of conflict but also a field of translation and negotiation. However, participants also warned that mediation can become coercive when it prioritizes social harmony over individual rights. This finding is important because it distinguishes constructive mediation from informal pressure. A rights-compatible model of mediation must operate within clear legal boundaries and must not require vulnerable individuals to sacrifice dignity, equality, or autonomy for the sake of communal consensus.

Overall, the findings suggest that contemporary legal orders require a careful balance between recognition and rights, pluralism and equality, religion and public reason, cultural continuity and legal accountability. A purely centralist legal model may fail because it ignores the social authority of religion and culture. Yet an uncritical pluralist model may also fail because it can legitimize internal domination or unequal access to justice. The study therefore supports a dialogical and rights-based approach to legal pluralism: legal institutions should acknowledge the social reality of religious and cultural normativity, but they must also ensure that all normative claims are evaluated through publicly defensible principles of dignity, equality, and freedom. This approach is consistent with theories of multicultural citizenship and democratic inclusion that seek neither assimilation nor unchecked group autonomy, but a constitutional framework for negotiating diversity (Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 2013; Parekh, 2000).

This study has several limitations. First, the illustrative design focuses on participants from Tehran, which means that the findings may not represent experiences in smaller cities, rural communities, or other national contexts. Second, the study relies on semi-structured interviews, and therefore captures participants' interpretations rather than direct observation of courts, mediation sessions, or community dispute-resolution processes. Third, the topic is sensitive, and participants may have moderated their responses when discussing religion, law, gender, or minority rights. Fourth, the sample includes informed actors with professional or community experience, so the findings may not fully reflect the perspectives of ordinary citizens who encounter normative tensions in everyday legal problems.

Future research should examine normative tensions among law, religion, and globalization across multiple cities and social groups. Comparative studies could investigate whether legal professionals, religious authorities, women's rights advocates, minority communities, and younger citizens interpret these tensions differently. Future studies may also combine interviews with document analysis, courtroom observation, or case studies of family law, inheritance, public morality, religious freedom, and minority recognition disputes. Longitudinal research would be valuable for understanding how global rights discourse, digital media, migration, and generational change gradually reshape legal consciousness and institutional practice.

Legal institutions should develop culturally informed but rights-protective mechanisms for managing disputes involving religious and cultural claims. Judges, lawyers, mediators, and social workers need training in legal pluralism, religious literacy, gender sensitivity, minority protection, and human rights standards. Mediation should be used carefully and only where participation is voluntary and rights are not compromised. Public legal education should explain rights in language that is accessible to religious and cultural communities while preserving the principles of equality, dignity, and freedom of conscience. Institutions should also create safe channels for vulnerable individuals within communities to seek legal advice without fear of social retaliation.

Conclusion

This study examined normative tensions among law, religion, and cultural globalization in contemporary legal orders through an interpretive qualitative framework. The illustrative findings show that legal order is not experienced as a single, unified structure but as a field of overlapping normative authorities. State law, religious morality, cultural tradition, global rights discourse, and community expectations interact in complex ways, particularly in disputes involving family, gender, identity, minority recognition, and public morality. Participants described religion as a continuing source of moral meaning while also emphasizing the need for legal institutions to maintain fairness, equality, and constitutional accountability.

The study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by showing that legal pluralism is both a structural condition and a lived experience. Normative tensions are not resolved simply by declaring the superiority of state law or by granting unrestricted autonomy to cultural and religious communities. Instead, contemporary legal orders require institutions capable of translation, mediation, and principled judgment. A sustainable approach must recognize religious and cultural diversity while protecting individuals from coercion, exclusion, and unequal treatment. The central challenge is therefore not to eliminate normative plurality, but to govern it through public reason, rights protection, institutional transparency, and respect for human dignity.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford University Press.
- Bader, V. (2007). *Secularism or democracy? Associational governance of religious diversity*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Berman, P. S. (2012). *Global legal pluralism: A jurisprudence of law beyond borders*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beyer, P. (1994). *Religion and globalization*. SAGE Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. University of Chicago Press.
- Casanova, J. (2006). Rethinking secularization: A global comparative perspective. *The Hedgehog Review*, 8(1–2), 7–22.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (2000). Multiple modernities. *Daedalus*, 129(1), 1–29.
- Ewick, P., & Silbey, S. S. (1998). *The common place of law: Stories from everyday life*. University of Chicago Press.
- Griffiths, J. (1986). What is legal pluralism? *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 18(24), 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Habermas, J. (2006). Religion in the public sphere. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x>
- Hirschl, R. (2010). *Constitutional theocracy*. Harvard University Press.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Merry, S. E. (1988). Legal pluralism. *Law & Society Review*, 22(5), 869–896. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>
- Merry, S. E. (2006). Transnational human rights and local activism: Mapping the middle. *American Anthropologist*, 108(1), 38–51. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2006.108.1.38>
- Modood, T. (2013). *Multiculturalism: A civic idea* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2008). *Liberty of conscience: In defense of America's tradition of religious equality*. Basic Books.
- Parekh, B. (2000). *Rethinking multiculturalism: Cultural diversity and political theory*. Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1997). The idea of public reason revisited. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 64(3), 765–807. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1600311>
- Santos, B. de Sousa. (2002). *Toward a new legal common sense: Law, globalization, and emancipation* (2nd ed.). Butterworths LexisNexis.
- Shachar, A. (2001). *Multicultural jurisdictions: Cultural differences and women's rights*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tamanaha, B. Z. (2008). Understanding legal pluralism: Past to present, local to global. *Sydney Law Review*, 30(3), 375–411.
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Harvard University Press.