

FACTORS THAT CAUSE RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE WHO CHANGE THEIR RELIGION

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Religion, the unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, unifies people into one single community' It is a social phenomenon and is internalized into a human being through the process of socialization from one generation to the other. There is a remote possibility of embracing a religion based on one's knowledge, experiences, cosmology and individual will. Yet, religious conversion can be seen in history as well as in contemporary society, however limited the possibility of conversion.

There is a significant trend towards conversion these days. This has been a hotly debated topic, since it seems to be rather influential in several wanderlizations, fights among different religious cults, segregations, and social exclusions. This study is significant since this is a timely topic which has a national level value and has not been addressed yet in a sociological perspective.

The main objectives of this study were to identify the factors that cause religious conversion, attitudes towards conversion of those who have changed their former religion, positive impact of conversion, and the socio-cultural problems, encountered by converts.

In this study, the researcher has used exploratory research methods. The sample of 40 (N=40) People has been selected from the Divisional Secretarial area of Mawanella in Kegalle District.

Both qualitative & quantitative data have been obtained by using informal interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire, case studies, and participant observations. The obtained data have been analyzed manually by using both qualitative & quantitative methods.

The research reveals that 75% of the respondents face socio- cultural problems such as negligence, exclusion, marginalization, violation of their basic human rights, and threats and insults, in domains like family, living area, and in other secondary social institutions due to conversion. Finally, this research brings some specific suggestions so as to overcome these difficulties such as changing the existing attitudes towards conversion through unbiased awareness programmes, implementing both existing and planned laws very strictly, and giving a multi- religious knowledge in schools in order to make people respect other religions.