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Suicide in Manggarai, Eastern Indonesia: Comparative Perspectives from Islamic, Catholic, and Indigenous Law

Fransiska Widyawati

Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, Indonesia
email: fwidyawati10@gmail.com

Sumanto Al Qurtuby

Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
email: sumanto.qurtuby@uksw.edu

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Abstract:

Suicide is a complex phenomenon that affects individuals and society, demanding global attention and requiring diverse approaches to be fully understood. This article presents a comparative study of suicide, analyzing both its conceptual and practical aspects within the frameworks of Islamic law, Catholic law, and customary law. For the conceptual analysis, a literature review focusing primarily on Islamic and Catholic law was utilized, while for the practical aspects in religious and customary communities, an ethnographic method was utilized. The research reveals both similarities and differences in how Islamic, Catholic, and local customary laws view suicide. All three perspectives condemn suicide as an act that contradicts life and violates their respective legal and moral codes. Although local cultural practices and the religious traditions in Manggarai—including both Christianity and Islam—generally disapprove of suicide, community responses to it vary. Religious approaches tend to be legalistic, individualistic, and moralistic, whereas Manggarai customary law emphasizes a communal, solution-oriented, and harmonious approach. This study contributes to the understanding of interfaith and intercultural



perspectives as essential in addressing social issues, including suicide.

Keywords

Suicide; Islam; Catholic; Local Culture; Law

Introduction

Suicide rates have surged globally, becoming a critical psychological and public health issue. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports over 720,000 annual suicide deaths, higher than deaths from HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth, with Asia having the highest rates.¹ Indonesia lacks official statistical data on suicide, but a recent national profile from Australian and Indonesian researchers reveals an upward trend. Findings indicate an underreporting rate of 859.10%, with hanging and self-poisoning as common methods.² Suicide rates are higher in rural areas, and there are concerns about familial suicides. In East Nusa Tenggara province, for instance, official statistics reported that in 2024, 226 villages recorded at least one case of suicide. If any village experienced more than one case, the total number of suicides is even higher.³

Suicide is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors. Religion and culture historically play significant roles in shaping beliefs about life, death, and the afterlife, leading to distinct concepts and practices related to suicide and death rituals. Durkheim (1858-1917) was the pioneer who associated suicide with social factors, particularly religion. He found that Catholics have lower suicide rates than Protestants due to stronger social control.⁴ His conclusion was

¹ World Health Organization, "Suicide," WHO News, March 25, 2025, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>.

² Sandersan Onie et al., "Indonesia's First Suicide Statistics Profile: An Analysis of Suicide and Attempt Rates, Underreporting, Geographic Distribution, Gender, Method, and Rurality," *The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia* 22, no. 1 (2024): 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lansea.2024.100368>.

³ Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, "Banyaknya Desa Menurut Keberadaan Korban Bunuh Diri, 2024," NTT BPS, January 20, 2025, <http://ntt.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/NzMzIzI=/banyaknya-desa-menurut-keberadaan-korban-bunuh-diri.html>.

⁴ Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1951).

reaffirmed by Becker and Woessmann⁵ who argued that Catholic teachings on the sanctity of life offer a clearer deterrent against suicide.

Since Emile Durkheim's pioneering work, academic literature on suicide from legal, historical, and contemporary perspectives has flourished. Within Islamic studies, one of the earliest studies was conducted by the renowned German-born orientalist Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003), who classified research on suicide into the actual cases of suicide within Muslim societies and the theoretical discussion.⁶ Bernard Lewis (1916-2018), a British-American historian, employed suicide as a technique between the 11th and 13th centuries.⁷ Karin Andriolo conducted a comparative study on suicide as a "legal practice" in "classical" Islam, focusing on three cases: the Nizari state's assassins, *juramentando*, a suicidal practice by Muslims in the Southern Philippines since the 16th century during Spanish colonialism, and suicide as martyrdom following the death of Hussein, Prophet Muhammad's grandson, in Karbala.⁸

Moreover, Stephen Frederic Dale wrote about suicidal attacks in three Muslim communities in India, the Philippines, and Indonesia, arguing that centuries-long confrontation with European colonials gave rise to suicidal attacks.⁹ Ahmed M Abdel-Khalek explores the idea of martyrdom (*istishhād*) in Islam, with a focus on Palestinian martyrs in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the founding of the Israeli state in 1948, as neither altruistic suicide nor suicide terrorism, by referring to opinions of several experts of Islamic law (*fuqahā*).¹⁰ The idea of "suicidal martyrdom," including female and familial suiciders and

⁵ Sascha O Becker and Ludger Woessmann, "Social Cohesion, Religious Beliefs, and the Effect of Protestantism on Suicide," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 100, no. 3 (2021): 377-91, <https://doi.org/10.1162/rest>.

⁶ David Lester, "Suicide and Islam," *Archives of Suicide Research* 10, no. 1 (2006): 77-97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811110500318489>.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

⁸ Karin Andriolo, "Murder by Suicide: Episodes from Muslim History," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 736-42, <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.736>.

⁹ Stephen Frederic Dale, "Religious Suicide in Islamic Asia: Anticolonial Terrorism in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32, no. 1 (1988): 37-59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002788032001002>.

¹⁰ Ahmed M Abdel-Khalek, "Neither Altruistic Suicide, nor Terrorism but Martyrdom: A Muslim Perspective," *Archives of Suicide Research* 8, no. 1 (2004): 99-113, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811110490243840>.

bombers, has also been researched by several experts in insurgency and terrorism studies.¹¹ David Lester examines completed and attempted suicide within Muslim societies, stating that completed suicide cases tend to be lower in Muslim societies than in non-Muslim communities.¹² Bernard Ineichen's study also indicates lower suicide rates among Muslims, especially compared to Hindus.¹³ Furthermore, other scholars try to look at the idea of suicide from the Qur'an or Hadith.¹⁴

On the other hand, studies focusing on Catholic perspectives on suicide abound. Robert Barry¹⁵ traces the development of Catholic teachings, highlighting the moral, philosophical, and existential aspects. Elayna Walloch discusses the consistent denunciation of suicide throughout Catholic history. Stanislaw Adamiak and Jan Dohnalik study the prohibition from the perspectives of Catholic morality and canonical tradition.¹⁶ Scholars like Michal Grudecki and Mateusz Sajkowski research suicide practices in Catholic communities, such as in Poland.¹⁷

In addition to religious studies, a comparative study on culture and grief by Gila Silverman, Aurelien Baroiller, and Susan Hemer suggests varied experiences of grief – as either part of the normal life cycle or in response to unexpected and/or traumatic deaths, including suicide – within multiple societies.¹⁸ A group of scholars from the

¹¹ Shaul Shay, *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks* (London: Routledge, 2017).

¹² Lester, "Suicide and Islam."

¹³ Bernard Ineichen, "The Influence of Religion on the Suicide Rate: Islam and Hinduism Compared," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 1998): 31–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674679808406495>.

¹⁴ Shiva Pouradeli et al., "A Review of Suicide in the Mirror of Islamic Hadiths and Traditions," *Journal of Suicide Prevention* 3 (2021): 17–26, <https://isssp.ir>.

¹⁵ Robert Barry, "The Development of the Roman Catholic Teachings on Suicide," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 9, no. 2 (1995): 449–501, <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndjlepp/vol9/iss2/4>.

¹⁶ Stanislaw Adamiak and Jan Dohnalik, "The Prohibition of Suicide and Its Theological Rationale in Catholic Moral and Canonical Tradition: Origins and Development," *Journal of Religion and Health* 62, no. 6 (2023): 3820–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-023-01900-w>.

¹⁷ Michal Grudecki and Mateusz Sajkowski, "Suicide from the Joint Perspective of Canon Law and Polish Law," *Acta Iuris Stetinensis* 31, no. 3 (2020): 23–39, <https://doi.org/10.18276/ais.2020.31-02>.

¹⁸ Gila S. Silverman, Aurélien Baroiller, and Susan R. Hemer, "Culture and Grief: Ethnographic Perspectives on Ritual, Relationships and Remembering," *Death Studies* 45, no. 1 (2021): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1851885>.

University of Oxford has investigated public (particularly bereaved family and mourners) perceptions of the “death taboo” in the context of sudden traumatic deaths, including suicide.¹⁹ Some scholars have also compared suicide rates across religious and secular countries, generally finding that religiosity reduces suicidal ideation.²⁰ A study by a group of scholars from the University of Minnesota examines the variety of protective functions of religion toward suicide ideation, suicidal behaviour, suicide attempts, and deaths by suicide.²¹ Variations do exist within religious communities. For example, Torgler and Schaltegger²² found that Protestants in the USA have higher suicide rates than Catholics and Jews. Some studies, like those in China and Vietnam,²³ show religion can also contribute to suicide, with cases of suicide bombings highlighting religion's dual role as both a deterrent and a potential motivator for suicide.²⁴ Lenzi et al.²⁵ argue that suicide is influenced by economic, religious, cultural, and familial factors. Societal breakdown and deregulation can lead to individualism and anomie, raising suicide rates. In individualist societies, where collective beliefs are often ignored, life may lose its appeal, and a lack of social

¹⁹ Alison Chapple, Sue Ziebland, and Keith Hawton, “Taboo and the Different Death? Perceptions of Those Bereaved by Suicide or Other Traumatic Death,” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 37, no. 4 (2015): 610–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12224>.

²⁰ Merike Sisask et al., “Is Religiosity a Protective Factor Against Attempted Suicide: A Cross-Cultural Case-Control Study,” *Archives of Suicide Research* 14, no. 1 (2010): 44–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1381110903479052>.

²¹ Graham Nelson et al., “Protective Functions of Religious Traditions for Suicide Risk,” *Suicidology Online* 3, no. 2009 (2012): 59–71, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:45055924>.

²² Benno Torgler and Christoph Schaltegger, “Suicide and Religion: New Evidence on the Differences between Protestantism and Catholicism,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53, no. 2 (2014): 316–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12117>.

²³ Minh Thi Hong Le et al., “Experience of Low Mood and Suicidal Behaviors among Adolescents in Vietnam: Findings from Two National Population-Based Surveys,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 51, no. 4 (2012): 339–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2011.12.027>.

²⁴ C. Christine Fair, Julie Chernov Hwang, and Moiz Abdul Majid, “The Pious or the Doctrinaire? Who Supports Suicide Terrorism in Indonesia?,” *Asian Security* 16, no. 3 (2020): 281–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1670641>.

²⁵ Matteo Lenzi, Erminia Colucci, and Harry Minas, “Suicide, Culture, and Society from a Cross-National Perspective,” *Cross-Cultural Research* 46, no. 1 (2011): 50–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397111424036>.

control can leave individuals unsatisfied. Contemporary society's traits of individualism and anomie further affect suicide rates.²⁶

In Indonesia, there is currently no comparative study on religious and cultural perspectives regarding suicide. Yet, given that religious and cultural approaches to addressing social issues are of vital importance in this deeply religious and culturally rich nation, this study seeks to fill that gap. It examines suicide from the perspectives of Islamic law, Catholic tradition, and local culture, with the research taking place in Manggarai, Eastern Nusa Tenggara. The Manggarai tribe lives in three districts in East Nusa Tenggara. Catholicism accounts for 89% of the population, Islam 9%, and the rest are Protestants, Hindus, Buddhists, and local beliefs. Catholicism was introduced by European missionaries in the early 20th century, and Islam by Bima and Sulawesi traders in the 16th century.²⁷ Despite being nominally Catholic, Manggarai native Catholics and indigenous Muslims adhere strongly to local customs and traditions, especially regarding life stages from birth to death. Allerton²⁸ noted that beliefs in ancestor spirits and cosmological forces remain robust. Native Muslims typically follow local traditions, although some recent Muslim groups have shown caution due to the Islamic purifying movement and new migrations.²⁹

This research explores how suicide is understood within Islamic law, Catholic doctrine, and the local Manggarai traditions. It examines the similarities and differences between these three perspectives and considers how they can learn from one another in addressing suicide as a shared social concern.

²⁶ Ermina Colucci, "Cultural Meaning(s) of Suicide: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Suicide and Culture: Understanding the Context*. (Cambridge: Hogrefe Publishing, 2013), 93-196.

²⁷ Fransiska Widyawati and Yohanes S. Lon, "The Catholic Church and the Covid-19 Pandemic Case Study of Bishop Ordination in Ruteng, Flores, Indonesia," *Journal of Law, Religion and State* 8, no. 2-3 (2021): 298-308, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22124810-20200111>.

²⁸ Catherine Allerton, "Static Crosses and Working Spirits: Anti-Syncretism and Agricultural Animism in Catholic West Flores," *Anthropological Forum* 19, no. 3 (2009): 271-87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00664670903278403>.

²⁹ Yohanes S. Lon and Fransiska Widyawati, "Food and Local Social Harmony: Pork, Communal Dining, and Muslim-Christian Relations in Flores, Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v26i3.9917>.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, integrating both literature review and field research methods. To comprehensively examine Islamic and Catholic legal perspectives on suicide, the research involved a detailed analysis of internal legal sources from both religions, as well as an exploration of how these laws are interpreted within academic discourse. For insights into customary law, an ethnographic approach was applied to investigate the traditional practices of the Manggarai community in East Nusa Tenggara. Data were gathered through interviews, ritual observations, and cultural interpretation. Respondents included local traditional leaders, families, and acquaintances who had experienced suicide within their community, in addition to local Islamic and Catholic religious figures and adherents. The collected data were qualitatively analysed to develop a comprehensive understanding of how religious communities and customary groups perceive the laws, liturgies, and rituals related to suicide. Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify both the similarities and differences among these three traditions.

Result and Discussion

Suicide in Islamic Law

In theory, Islamic norms and Sharia generally prohibit suicide (*intihār*), with some exceptions and variations in opinion. Theodor Noldeke (1836-1930) noted the rarity of suicide in Islamic doctrine, writing, “a religion [Islam] among the followers of which suicide is almost absolutely unknown.”³⁰ Nonetheless, from past centuries to the present, many Muslims have committed or attempted suicide for various reasons, ranging from sociopolitical and psychological factors to religious, theological, and ideological ones. Previous studies suggest that suicide rates in Muslim societies tend to be lower compared to other groups, although recent increases in suicides in the Muslim world challenge these findings.³¹ Both completed and attempted suicides have become pressing social issues in recent decades.

For some Muslims, suicidal behaviour is no longer “*taboo*” or haram (unlawful). This includes ideological Islamists, devout

³⁰ Theodor Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1982).

³¹ Ineichen, “The Influence of Religion on the Suicide Rate: Islam and Hinduism Compared.”

adherents, and nominal Muslims.³² Examples of suicide among Muslims include Palestinian suicide bombers, Indonesian Muslim students jumping from buildings or bridges due to frustration, and a young Tunisian vendor who self-immolated in protest of economic hardship and government dictatorship.³³ During the Arab Spring, hundreds of Muslims emulated Tunisia's Mohammed Bouazizi, committing suicide as a form of protest against dictatorial regimes.³⁴

Moreover, Algeria-based newspapers report daily instances of suicide or self-immolation among Algerians (Muslims) escaping harsh realities.³⁵ Research indicates frequent suicidal ideation and attempts among Muslim adolescents in Tunisia, posing a serious public health issue.³⁶ Alarmingly, recent decades have seen suicide practices by mothers or entire families, including suicide terrorism or altruistic suicide, in countries like Indonesia and Iraq. Mohsen Rezaeian's³⁷ study highlights a high rate of suicide attempts among young Muslim females in the Middle East.³⁸ Clearly, suicide (completed or attempted) exists in Muslim-majority nations, as elsewhere.

Given these various practices of suicide among Muslims globally, the question persists: if Islam forbids suicide, why do some Muslims commit it? If religion can protect against suicidal behaviour, as argued by Robin Gearing and Dana Lizardi, why do many Muslims (and other religious adherents) practice suicide?³⁹

³² Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 2012).

³³ Ineichen, "The Influence of Religion on the Suicide Rate: Islam and Hinduism Compared."

³⁴ Rauf Arif, "Social Movements, YouTube and Political Activism in Authoritarian Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Political Change in Pakistan, Tunisia & Egypt" (University of Iowa, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.ej7y9nzm>.

³⁵ Dominique Avon, "Suicide, Islam, and Politics: Reflections on the Events in Tunisia," *Books and Ideas* (Oxford, 2011), <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01631228/document>.

³⁶ Asma Guedria-Tekari et al., "Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts among Tunisian Adolescents: Prevalence and Associated Factors," *Pan African Medical Journal* 34, no. 1 (2019): 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2019.34.105.19920>.

³⁷ Mohsen Rezaeian, "Suicide among Young Middle Eastern Muslim Females," *Crisis* 31, no. 1 (2010): 36-42, <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000005>.

³⁸ Rezaeian.

³⁹ Ryan E Lawrence, Maria A Oquendo, and Barbara Stanley, "Religion and Suicide Risk: A Systematic Review," *Archives of Suicide Research: Official Journal of the International Academy for Suicide Research* 20, no. 1 (2016): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2015.1004494>.

The Qur'an and Hadith ban suicide for any reason, with few exceptions. Most Islamic scholars (*al-'ulamā'*) and jurists (*fuqahā'*) from the classical to contemporary era also forbid suicide without legitimate reasons.⁴⁰ Franz Rosenthal noted that the Prophet Muhammad's disapproval of suicide aligns with negative views in Christianity and Judaism, evident in several Qur'an and Hadith passages that ban self-murder and bodily harm. These include the following verses such as *an-Nisā'* (4):29, "...do not kill yourself" (*wa lā taqtulū anfusakum, inna Allāha kāna bikum rahīmā*), *an-Nisā'* (4):30, "Whoever commits that [suicide] by way of aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire [Hell]" (*wa man yaf'al dhālika 'udwānan wa zulman fasawfa nuṣlīhi nārā, wa kāna zālika 'alā Allāhi yasīrā...*), or Al-Baqara (2):195 "...do not let your own hands throw you into destruction..." (*wa lā tulqū bi-aydikum ilā at-tahlukah*).

Books compiling Hadith within Sunni (e.g., *Sahih Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, etc.) or Shia (*Al-Kāfi*, *al-Istibṣār*, etc.) have underscored the unlawfulness of the suicidal practice. For example, in *Sahih Bukhari* (Book 83, Hadith 31), Muhammad said, "...whoever commits suicide with something, will be punished with the same thing in Hell" (*Wa man qatala nafsahu bishay'in 'uddiba bihi fi an-nār ...*). Hadith compiled by Shia scholars also shows Muhammad's ban on suicide, stating that those who commit suicide will not enter Paradise. Muhammad also forbade his followers from praying to suiciders.⁴¹

However, although the Qur'an generally disapproves of suicidal practice, some verses in the Qur'an [for example, *An-Nisa* (4):66 or *Al-Baqarah* (2):54] also somehow indicate the lawfulness or the legality of self-killing for some reasons, albeit some Islamic scholars consider the text should be read in a particular setting, such a war. In these verses, the Qur'an states "kill yourselves" (*uqtulū anfusakum* or *faqtulū anfusakum*). Although the Qur'an tends to show a little bit of ambiguity, Islamic scholars and Muslim jurists (including Indonesian ulama), with some exceptions, condemn suicide.

One of the exceptions of "lawful or legal suicide" (*mashrū'*), some Islamic scholars within Shi'I and Sunni traditions generally have agreed, is in the case of martyrdom (*istishhād*), which is a death due to Muslim engagement in an armed *401uici* against the "enemy" of Islam

⁴⁰ Lester, "Suicide and Islam."

⁴¹ Lester.

to guard his/her faith, nation, or *ummah*. Nonetheless, the concept of martyrdom remains a contested area among Islamic scholars and jurists and is the product of the reinterpretation of Islamic scholars and jurists toward some Qur'anic verses and Hadith texts. Indeed, classical and contemporary Islamic scholars have expressed different opinions concerning the concept of jihad, what constitutes the armed jihad, and under what circumstances a battle or war is considered jihad. Examples of classical Islamic figures who are recognized for their engaged discussions on the concept of martyrdom in early centuries of Islam include Ibn Jurayj, Abd Allah ibn Umar, Amr ibn Dinar, and Sufyan al-Thaury, though they expressed differing views on the interpretation of the text "Fighting in the cause of Allah." In the contemporary era, renowned Shiite Islamic scholars who expressed their approval of legal suicide as part of martyrdom in the armed jihad include Imam Ruhollah Khomeini (Iran's former supreme leader), Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (a former noted Iraqi jurist), and Sayyid Muhammad Fadlallah (a former spiritual mentor of Lebanon's Hezbollah). ⁴²Moreover, Yusuf Qaradawi (1926-2022) was one of the Sunni Islamic scholars who supported Muslims (jihadists) committing suicide attacks against "non-Muslim infidel enemies," including Palestinians.⁴³

However, how do suicide attacks targeting "Muslim foes," such as bombings or self-immolation in Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Indonesia, fit within Islamic teachings? Islamic scholars vary in their responses. Qaradawi supported the suicidal acts of Tunisia's Bouazizi and others during the Arab Spring, seeing them as martyrs fighting unjust regimes, despite being Muslim. His position is interesting because, in Sunni tradition (unlike Shia), jihad or martyrdom usually targets non-Muslim enemies. In Shia tradition, jihad applies to both non-Muslim and Muslim regimes. Conversely, the late Othman Battikh (1942-2022), former Grand Mufti of Tunisia, condemned all forms of

⁴² Becker and Woessmann, "Social Cohesion, Religious Beliefs, and the Effect of Protestantism on Suicide."

⁴³ Magdi Abdelhadi, "The Arrival in Britain of the Islamic Preacher, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, to Take Part in a Conference Has Sparked a Row Because of His Controversial Views on Suicide Bombings," *News BBC*, July 7, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3874893.stm.

suicide, deeming it a grave crime forbidden by Islamic Sharia. He insisted that suicides should not accept Islamic burial rites.⁴⁴

The declaration by Egypt's al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, led by Shaikh Abdul Hamid al-Atrash during the Arab Spring, reinforced Battikh's fatwa. Egypt also saw numerous suicides during this period. Al-Atrash declared suicide, under any circumstances, illegal and unjustifiable, citing the Qur'an: "...do not throw yourself into destruction by your own hands..." (Al-Baqarah 2:195).

During the Arab Spring in the Middle East, pro-government Islamic scholars within Sunni and Shia (including Saudi mufti Shaikh Nasir bin Sulaiman al-Umar) generally cited Qur'anic and Hadith passages outlawing suicide. In contrast, those opposed to the government or with negative experiences, like al-Qaradawi, tended to support suicide. Broadly speaking, Islamic jurists, scholars, and *403uici* agree that suicide considered to escape economic hardships, personal problems, or psychological issues is forbidden. However, suicide terrorism remains contentious. Some clerics, such as al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri or Jemaah Islamiyah's Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, permitted it, while others, such as Saudi Abdul Aziz bin Baz, Egyptian Ali Gomaa, and Indonesian Muhammad Quraish Shihab, opposed it.⁴⁵ These differences extend to related issues such as prayers for the dead and burial practices.

Indonesian and Manggarai Islam share similar dynamics. While most Muslims in Indonesia, including in Manggarai, condemn suicide, some tacitly or publicly approve of suicide attacks against non-Muslims. For example, after the 2002 Bali Bombings, some Muslims glorified the perpetrators as martyrs (*syuhadā*), prayed for their souls, and ensured proper burials.⁴⁶ Manggarai Muslims, including scholars, leaders, teachers, and ordinary followers, exhibit ambiguity in their responses to suicide deaths. Although they generally denounce suicidal behaviour, they are ambivalent about handling the deceased.

⁴⁴ Avon, "Suicide, Islam, and Politics: Reflections on the Events in Tunisia"; Surya Sukti et al., "Political Dynamics of Islamic Law in the Reform Era: A Study of the Response of Muhammadiyah Cadres in Central Kalimantan," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022): 1022–45, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.12415>.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Munir, "Suicide Attacks and Islamic Law," *International Review of the Red Cross* 90, no. 869 (2008): 71–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383108000040>.

⁴⁶ Munir.

A member of Manggarai's Islamic Scholars Council (MUI), for instance, said,

"Islam denounces suicide, but we are dubious about praying and respecting the dead (due to suicide). Suiciders will be in Hell because they reject God's mercy and oppose the Qur'an's mandate. However, because we live in a society, I would suggest praying silently for them, and if the family members want to have a ceremonial feast (*kenduri*), please do so quietly. Otherwise, people might assume we have tacitly endorsed their acts."⁴⁷

The ambiguity of response concerning the act of suicide and the way to take care of the suicide's corpse was also given by Haji Marola, a religious leader from the Manggarai branch of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization. On one hand, he seemed to disapprove of suicide, but on the other hand, he could understand people who prayed for the departed and took care of the death due to suicide. Marola said,

"There are several opinions about suicide. If someone commits suicide because of despair (hopelessness), Muslims cannot look after his/her body, such as conducting prayers, performing death rites, as well as clothing, and burying the dead body. This is because Allah (God) condemns hopeless or disparate people. Yet, some Muslims conduct proper burials and rituals towards those who die due to self-immolation, just like death by other causes, because, for them, people cannot judge other people's fate in the afterlife since it is only in the "hands" of God who can judge bad or good towards people and determine humans' salvation."⁴⁸

A local teacher of the Islamic religion also condemned suicide because this act is against God's law, as stated in the Qur'an, and those who die because of suicide will get a punishment (including *siksa kubur*)

⁴⁷ Marola, a religious leader from the Manggarai branch of Nahdlatul Ulama, Interview, July, 2024.

⁴⁸ Marola.

by God in the afterlife world. Concerning the death rituals, such as prayers (*salat jenazah*) or burials, all depend on the *imam* (a local Muslim cleric). The best way is to let the family members pray and look after the deceased.⁴⁹ Several Muslims in Manggarai also shared this view, adding that local imams perhaps will refuse to pray to the dead because if they do so, people will assume that the imams agree with suicide.

However, although the Qur'an generally disapproves of suicidal practice, some verses in the Qur'an [for example, An-Nisa (4):66 or Al-Baqarah (2):54] also somehow indicate the lawfulness or the legality of self-killing for some reasons, albeit some Islamic scholars consider the text should be read in a particular setting such as war.

To sum up, while classical Islamic doctrine strictly prohibits suicide as a violation of divine command, real-world practice presents complexities. Despite historically low suicide rates in Muslim-majority societies, modern pressures have led to increased cases, including acts framed as martyrdom. Scholarly debates persist—some rejecting suicide outright, others interpreting certain acts as a protest. This tension underscores the challenge of reconciling religious law with evolving societal realities.

Suicide in Catholic Laws

The Catholic Church's laws about suicide have evolved throughout a lengthy history and tradition. The Church regards suicide as a form of homicide. The Church also considers suicide as an action that contradicts the all-powerful nature and benevolent design of God.⁵⁰ More importantly, suicide is an act that goes against oneself, self-love, the desire to live, and the principles of love for others and society as a whole, as stated in the Doctrine of the Sacred Congregation of Faith. Catholic doctrines believe that the human body is not owned by the individual but rather by a higher power, namely God. The condemnation against suicide primarily stems from the biblical notion that men are formed in the likeness of God (Genesis 9). Thus, suicide eradicates the manifestation of God's likeness inherent in human beings.

⁴⁹ A school teacher of Islam, *Interview*, July, 2024.

⁵⁰ Adamiak and Dohnalik, "The Prohibition of Suicide and Its Theological Rationale in Catholic Moral and Canonical Tradition: Origins and Development."

Moreover, suicide is in direct violation of God's decree against taking a life (Exodus 23, 7). An instance of suicide described in the New Testament recounts the hanging of Judas Iscariot following his betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22, 21-23; Mark 14,17-21, Matthew 26: 20-25). The suicide was perceived as an action that tarnished the reputation of God, a manifestation of his discipleship's failure, and a rejection of salvation. Another biblical account of suicide pertains to Paul, who intervened to prevent a prisoner from taking his own life after mistakenly believing that the convicts had fled (Acts 16:25-32). Paul instructed the incarcerated individual to have faith in Jesus to achieve salvation.⁵¹

Saint Augustine (354-430), in his work *The City of God*, denounces suicide as a violation of fortitude and humanity.⁵² The medieval Church forbade suicide to avoid pain, urging Christians to face suffering with faith, hope, and charity. Restrictions and penalties, including denial of burial, were imposed to dissuade suicide. Councils like those of Nimes and Orleans declined burials for suicides, viewing self-inflicted death as an irredeemable sin.⁵³ Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), in *Summa Theologica*, condemned suicide for its selfishness, arguing it contradicts God's benevolence and hope. Suicide violates human life and offends God, the giver of life. Aquinas' views have influenced Christian thought from medieval times to the present.⁵⁴

Since the 16th century, the Church has prohibited the burial or blessing of individuals who have taken their own lives. The 1917 Code of Canon Law firmly established this restriction, leading to the denial of prayers and traditional blessings for suicides. Transporting corpses within the church was also considered taboo.⁵⁵ However, recognizing suicide as a result of mental illness, the 1983 Canon Law eliminated the prohibition on Catholic burials for suicide victims, treating them like any other natural death. Despite this change, many priests, parishes,

⁵¹ Informal conversations with several Manggarai Muslims, June-July, 2024.

⁵² Anton J.L. Van Hooff, "Voluntary Death in Latin," in *Latin Studies in Honour of JH Brouwers*, ed. Litteras (Nijmegen: Nijmegen University, 2001).

⁵³ Barry, "The Development of the Roman Catholic Teachings on Suicide."

⁵⁴ Tom L. Beauchamp, "Suicide in the Age of Reason," in *Suicide and Euthanasia*, 35th ed. (Heidelberg: Springer Nature, 1989), 183-219, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-7838-7_6.

⁵⁵ Justyna Głowala, "Martyrdom, Suicide and Absolute Negative Norms," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae UKSW* 51, no. 2 (2015): 1-35, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=512825>.

and dioceses still refuse Catholic Eucharist Mass and burial rites for those who have died by suicide.⁵⁶

On the other hand, Catholic teaching holds martyrdom as the highest testimony of faith, involving steadfastness even unto death,⁵⁷ as detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC Art 8 #2473).⁵⁸ Martyrdom sanctifies the truth of faith and reflects ultimate love and loyalty to God. There are three categories: Red Martyrdom: Dying for one's faith through persecution or execution, excluding suicide, which is not justified. White Martyrdom: A life of sacrifice and renunciation without bloodshed. Green Martyrdom: A life of penance, fasting, and ascetic practices.⁵⁹

Now, how do Manggarai's Catholics implement the Church's views and rules regarding suicide? Suicide cases involving Catholics are a significant concern for both the church and society. Based on observations, discussions, and interviews with several figures,⁶⁰ Catholic death ceremonies generally fall into three categories: the celebration of the Eucharist/Mass, the service of the word, and ordinary prayers. The Mass or Eucharist can only be performed by a priest. According to Catholic theology, the Eucharist is the pinnacle of all liturgies⁶¹ marked by the communion – the breaking of the body and blood of Christ.

In the common death, the Eucharistic celebration may be led by one or more priests. When the dead person or his/her family is a religious figure or related to an important church figure, the number of priests can be quite large. The more priests present, the more prestigious the celebration is perceived to be. It is considered an honour

⁵⁶ Grudecki and Sajkowski, "Suicide from the Joint Perspective of Canon Law and Polish Law."

⁵⁷ Paul Middleton, "What Is Martyrdom?," *Mortality* 19, no. 2 (2014): 117-33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2014.894013>.

⁵⁸ Paus Yohanes Paulus II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994).

⁵⁹ Nikolas O Hoel, "Hues of Martyrdom: Monastic and Lay Asceticism in Two Homilies of Gregory the Great on the Gospels," *The Downside Review* 138, no. 1 (2020): 3-18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0012580620910973>.

⁶⁰ Basil, Son and Dita, *Interview*, August, 2024.

⁶¹ Yeremia AJ Welan et al., "The Meaning of the Eucharist in Everyday Life," *Journal of Asian Empirical Theology* 2023, no. 3 (2023): 152-58, <http://jaemth.org/index.php/JAEmTh>; Thomas O'Loughlin, "Eucharistic Celebrations: The Chasm between Idea and Action," *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1034 (2010): 423-38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01322.x>.

if the Eucharistic celebration is attended by many priests.⁶² Families with close ties to priests may hold the Mass twice or even three times before burial. Additionally, some families hold a closing prayer Mass, a 40-day Mass, and other commemorative Masses (e.g., 100 days, 1 year, 1000 days). While this service can be led by a priest, the service of the word is more commonly conducted by a religious teacher, catechist, or community leader. Another category is ordinary prayers, which are performed by individuals, families, or larger communities. According to several informants, these prayers can be done spontaneously and may be repeated several times a day in the event of a death.⁶³

What kind of services are held for deaths due to suicide, and what are the views of Catholic leaders and people in Manggarai? Based on field research, here are some concrete responses and attitudes of the local Catholic church in such cases.

First, there was often a refusal from the church, especially the priest, to hold a mass/Eucharist for the blessing of the body and the burial of the victim. Some priests openly stated their reluctance or outright refusal to hold a Eucharistic celebration, citing other commitments. Instead, they encouraged families to conduct a service of the word, either led by the priest or a layperson in the priest's absence. When asked, a priest who had never received a request for a mass death explained,

"Many priests avoid leading masses for those who have committed suicide to prevent the impression that suicide is sanctified. Traditionally, the masses were not allowed for them, as it was believed they were rejecting God. Although this teaching has evolved, many priests still prefer a simple mass or ordinary worship to address suicide."⁶⁴

Second, instead of a Mass/Eucharist, a service is held 1 by lay personnel from the group or family members of the deceased. According to several testimonies, in some cases, the priest may perform a brief service to bless the body. There is a general perception that a

⁶² Aleks, Hendrik, and Frans, *Interview*, July, 2024.

⁶³ Aleks.

⁶⁴ Fr. John, *Interview*, August 18, 2024.

lengthy and elaborate service is inappropriate for a suicide death. Priests also tend to avoid lingering at the residence of the deceased. Such services are typically conducted at home, in front of the body, and are not continued at the grave, so the priest performs no special burial blessing. One priest explained,

“A Mass is not required for every death; a worship service alone suffices. Educating the congregation on this is crucial. When someone commits suicide, some priests prefer a simple worship service, which retains its significance.”⁶⁵

Third, some priests are willing to conduct a Mass, but it is often shorter and lacks the usual festivity and grandeur. Regarding the family's perspective, one anonymous family member shared,

“When our younger brother committed suicide, we asked the priest to lead the Mass. However, other family members disagreed, and even the community leader was reluctant, considering it a shameful death. Eventually, the parish priest held a Mass. We were grateful, feeling that the Mass helped us pray for our brothers' sins to be forgiven. Although the Mass was brief, we were content as long as it occurred.”⁶⁶

In summary, the Catholic Church's stance on suicide has evolved over time. While traditionally condemning suicide as a grave sin and denying proper funeral rites, the Church's understanding has shifted with advances in mental health science. Although suicide is still condemned, recognition of its connection to mental illness has led to a more compassionate approach. The Church has revised its liturgical practices to allow dignified burial rites. In practice, some clergy and believers still struggle with this shift and may refuse rituals for victims. However, a growing awareness of the need for empathy has led to

⁶⁵ Jhon.

⁶⁶ E, *Interview*, April 22, 2024.

more inclusive funeral rites, even if they are sometimes offered hesitantly.

Suicide in Manggarai Indigenous Law

Manggarai societies believe that death can be categorized into two types: natural death and unnatural death. Stanis, Tote, and Leksi,⁶⁷ all of whom are senior Manggarai *adat* elders and leaders, said that death has two types: death inside the house (*mata one mbaru*) or "natural death" and death outside the house (*mata pe'ang tana*) or unnatural death (*mata dara ta'a*). The death inside the house occurring at home or by natural causes refer to the cessation of life resulting from disease or advanced age. A house is considered to be one's dwelling, a familial residence, a medical facility, or a vacation home. Deaths outside the house might be attributed to natural disasters, accidents, homicide, and suicide.

Tote and other participants from Manggarai *adat* elders such as Basil and Yuli⁶⁸ said that the Manggarains believe that death is regarded as *benta le Dewa, awit le Jari* (a holy calling from the Divine/Creator). Death is also considered as "*kole*" (journey back) to the One who bestowed life. Mortality is an inherent aspect of the divine's grand design. Nevertheless, suicide is seen as unnatural as it deviates from the Divine's intended design for life. Suicide deaths are considered on par with fatalities resulting from natural catastrophes, homicides, or accidents.

This form of demise can signify a disruption in the harmony of the universe that is taking place. Disasters can be perceived as "*itang agu nangki*," (curse and punishment), which refers to malevolent forces unleashed by ancestor spirits or nature as a consequence of human disloyalty or errors. According to Stanis,

"Disasters indicate a disruption in the harmonious relationship between humans, the Divine, spirit, and nature, suggesting that something is amiss. In the case of such fatalities, families and local communities are required to carry out specific rituals to restore harmony with the

⁶⁷ Stanis Tatul, *Interview*, December 9, 2023 - April 2, 2024; Tote, *Interview*, March 14, 2024; Yohanes, *Interview*, July 25, 2024 - September 15, 2024.

⁶⁸ Yosef Tote, *Interview*, July 18, 2024; Basil, *Interview*, Augst 23, 2024; Yuli, *Interview*, Augst 26, 2024.

entire cosmic framework. Disasters necessitate human introspection and prompt the need for proactive measures to restore harmony with both spiritual and natural elements, thereby reinstating the disrupted equilibrium.”⁶⁹

Within the local setting, the disturbance is not attributable to an individual's personal wrongdoing. While one person may be the immediate target, its impact extends to the communal level, encompassing the family, village, or tribe. When someone dies because of murder, suicide, or accident, the Manggarai tribal ethics and beliefs prioritize examining the role and presence of the family and the entire community in the occurrence rather than questioning or blaming the personal responsibility of the deceased victim. The primary inquiry is, “*Mori, apa sala dami*” which conveys the message, “Lord, what is *our* sin?” The terms “*dami/our*” are employed instead of “*diha/dise* or his/her/their”.⁷⁰

Death by suicide, being an unnatural and disastrous event that occurs prematurely and is not a result of divine intervention, is considered undesirable. Yohanes said that

“The Manggarai regarded death as an unacceptable event and something that should not take place within the community. Therefore, education takes place during the rite. The elders instruct children, youths, and citizens to avoid engaging in activities that may lead to catastrophe, homicide, or self-destruction. Nevertheless, when the fatality ensued, the community was not implicated as the perpetrator of the curse. Families and communities bear the responsibility for honouring the deceased members through various rites, so acknowledging their deaths.”⁷¹

Various ceremonies serve as a manifestation of respect for the deceased. The rituals for both natural deaths and deaths resulting from tragedies, including suicide, share certain similarities while also exhibiting distinct variations. During the process of mourning, the

⁶⁹ Tote.

⁷⁰ Tote; Basil, *Interview*; Yuli, *Interview*.

⁷¹ Tote.

initial ritual is the act of *loling*, which refers to placing the deceased body. The Manggarai people distinguish between *loling* for a person who died naturally and those who died unnaturally. For those who died naturally, the body is put *inside* the house, usually in *lutur* (living room). The deceased's body is positioned with the head oriented towards the entrance. In cases of an unnatural death, conversely, the body is positioned *outside* the home with the head facing the entrance of the house or the house.⁷²

In essence, according to Stanis and Tote,⁷³ a natural death ideally takes place within the confines of one's home. This allows the family to remain close to their loved one during their final moments. The home serves as a comforting, warm, and loving gateway into the afterlife. While dying outside of the home, particularly in the absence of family, can be a sorrowful experience, lack warmth and companionship. Moreover, locations outside the home may not always be safe and could potentially harbour frightening spirits. Therefore, it is necessary for the deceased to be brought back home first, positioning their head towards the house. Their body needs to be oriented in such a way that their head faces the house, serving as a starting point for their transition to the next world.

It is important to note that the Manggarai does not recognize the concepts of heaven and hell. Specifically, there is no notion that an individual who passes away would undergo the anguish and agony of hell. Mortality is the gateway to an alternate realm. This road can be traversed in both upstream and downstream directions, as well as outward and inward directions, resembling the interconnected nature of the Divine.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, due to the unnatural nature of the death, there are certain supplementary rites in place to ensure the deceased's soul transitions gently to the afterlife and to facilitate reconciliation among the family or community.

Another ritual is called *ela/mbe haeng nai* (literally: pig/goat to accompany the death), which involves the presentation of a pig (for non-Muslims) or goat (for Muslims) by close relatives to the grieving nuclear family as a symbolic gesture of mourning. It serves as a manifestation of solidarity and alleviates the emotional weight placed

⁷² Tadeus, *Interview*, June 18 - August 26, 2024.

⁷³ Tote, *Interview*; Stanis, *Interview*, August 24, 2024.

⁷⁴ Martinus, *Interview*, September 2, 2024.

upon the bereaved family. There is no disparity in the handling of suicides and other causes of death in this regard. In addition to giving pigs or goats, other inhabitants bring *wae lu'u* (tears) money as a symbol of sorrow and financial assistance. Engaging in suicide does not result in individuals avoiding the family of the deceased, as support and unity help alleviate the weight of sorrow and financial obligations persists.⁷⁵

The next ritual is *boak*, or burying. There are unique customs concerning the orientation of the deceased's body. For those who died naturally, the head of the deceased is directed towards "*le*" (upstream or towards the mountain), with the feet pointing in the opposite direction to the sea/downstream. For those who died due to suicide, disaster, accident, or any unnatural causes, the orientation of the body is reversed. The head is directed towards "*lau*" (downstream), and the feet towards "*le*" (upstream). Figure 1 shows the example of a grave of a person who died due to an accident (unnatural death), whose head is facing in a different direction from the other graves behind it.



Source: personal collection

Figure 1. The different direction of grave for unnatural death

It can be seen from Figure 1 that the people who died in different ways have a distinction for their graveyard position. Following the burial, there are two more rituals in natural death: *saung*

⁷⁵ Tadeus, *Interview*, June 18, 2024.

ta'a (green leaf) and *kélas* (conclusion or closing). But, when a person dies unnaturally (unnatural death), including suicide, the people do not perform the two rituals, but the *cingke tahang* (separating the lime) and *oke dara ta'a* (throwing away raw/green blood) rituals. *Saung ta'a*, in literal terms, refers to green leaves that represent a sense of vitality and newness. When someone dies, the family refrains from engaging in activities that bring joy, such as traveling, working, and worshiping, as they normally would. Life can be likened to a desiccated leaf. Following the period of sorrow, the leaves transform and regain their green color (*saung ta'a*), signifying their readiness to resume their normal existence.⁷⁶ *Saung ta'a*, as can be seen in Figure 2, is not the last ritual, but *kélas* (conclusion/closing ritual).



Source: personal collection

Figure 2. One part of *saung ta'a* ritual, a pig is slaughter in front of the house

As can be seen from Figure 2, during the *saung ta'a* ritual, there is a pig slaughter. As explained before, the closing ceremony, *Kélas*, is significantly larger, necessitating a substantial number of financial resources. More specifically, this ritual can be seen in Figure 3a and 3b. As a result, families typically conduct *kélas* over an extended duration, until all families have accumulated sufficient money to cover this

⁷⁶ Feliks, *Interview*, December 18, 2023.

significant ceremony. According to Ben, Flori, Meri, and Vinsen,⁷⁷ *kélas* can be postponed for several months or even years. The fundamental nature of the *kélas* is perpetual division. The deceased no longer coexist with the living. He/she will receive perpetual provisions to prevent him from depleting the family's wealth any further. Through the presence of sophistication and elegance, the departed individual will join a collective of ethereal beings and forebears.



a.

b

Source: personal collection

Figure 3. Part of *kelas* ritual

It can be seen in Figure 3a, part of the *kelas* ritual, that preparing for buffalo slaughter is compulsory. Meanwhile, Figure 3b shows one part of the *kelas* ritual for normal death. When individuals die unnaturally, including suicide, *saung ta'a* and *kelas* are not performed, but *cingke tahang* and *oke dala ta'a*. The phrase "*cingke*" refers to the process of separating something; *tahang* is lime flour, a spice used to eat with betel leaves. Literally, *cingke tahang* means to divide or separate the lime flour into two portions. The ritual aims to declare the two ways of a different world between the person who died unnaturally and his/her living family/community members.⁷⁸ The ritual aims to underscore the importance of avoiding the same fatal road within the family. A deceased individual is unable to bring companions on their voyage, nor are they capable of bringing a living individual. He/she must return to his realm. This ritual is performed inside the house

⁷⁷ Feliks.

⁷⁸ Tote, *Interview*, May 23, 2024.

where the corpse was buried. A pig or goat is the must-sacrificial animal for offering to the spirits.⁷⁹

Following the ceremony of *cingke tahang*, the closing ritual is performed, known as "*oke dara ta'a*" (*throwing away raw blood*). It aims to eliminate bad luck. This rite involves the act of sacrificing a black chicken at the point where two rivers meet. Once the chicken is killed, it is allowed to float along with the river's current. A black chicken is slaughtered and discarded into the river, symbolizing the disposal of

Aspect	Law		
	Islam	Catholic	Manggarai Culture
Norm	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited and considered unnatural died
Related concept	Istish-had, jihad	Sin, mental illness, against the life, against the Creator	<i>Mata dara ta'a</i> , unnatural death, disharmony
Local people' treatment	Depending on imam's fatwa; prayers and feast	Communal prayers and mass in simple way. There were priests refused to perform mass but just a simple prayer or liturgy	Perform many rituals for harmony with nature, the creator and ancestors. Those who die by suicide are buried in the opposite direction compared to those who die normally

Table 1. Comparison of Islam, Catholic and Manggarai Customary

all negative occurrences, misfortunes, mortality, and malevolence. Living individuals must not be subjected to these negative experiences once more. Based on such discussion, researchers tried to figure out that there are some basic things of differences between Islam, catholic, and Manggarai Culture, which are presented in Table 1.

To sum up, under Manggarai customary law, suicide isn't met with blame but with communal reflection on the circumstances that led to the tragedy, followed by traditional death rites. This approach—rooted in a communal, not individual, understanding of life and

⁷⁹ Tote.

calamity—sometimes clashes with Catholic or Islamic teachings. Manggarai people, whether Catholic, Muslim, or adherents of local beliefs, respond to these conflicts in varied, context-driven ways shaped by their faith and situation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that while both Islamic and Catholic traditions doctrinally condemn suicide as an act that violates the sanctity of life, there are notable differences in emphasis and practical response within each. In general, both religions view suicide as a serious transgression against divine law and human life, yet within Islam, certain extremist factions have reinterpreted suicidal acts as forms of martyrdom—an idea that persists in some contexts—whereas this reframing has largely disappeared from contemporary Catholic thought. In contrast, the indigenous Manggarai tradition, while similarly regarding suicide as morally problematic, approaches the issue from a communal perspective: it is seen not only as an individual failing but as a collective tragedy that disrupts social harmony and the equilibrium of the cosmos. Rather than denying proper rites and rituals as is common in religious contexts, Manggarai practices engage the family and wider community through elaborate reconciliation ceremonies designed to restore balance and healing. These differences reveal that, despite a shared disapproval of suicide, Islamic and Catholic frameworks tend to adopt more individualistic, legalistic, and punitive stances, whereas the Manggarai traditions prioritize collective restoration and empathetic healing. Such divergent approaches provide opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, encouraging an exchange of perspectives that might contribute to more compassionate and holistic responses to the complex issue of suicide. Although this study provides valuable insights into the differences and similarities among Islamic, Catholic, and Manggarai perspectives on suicide, it is limited by its focus on a single region and its reliance on qualitative data. Future research could expand the geographical scope and incorporate quantitative methods to capture a wider range of factors influencing cultural responses to suicide.

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