

An Exploratory Study of the Dynamics of Marital Adaptation in Chinese-Javanese Couples

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Abstract. Inter-ethnic marriages have challenges in the adaptation process due to cultural differences, stereotypes and prejudices between ethnicities. This study aims to explore the dynamics of marital adaptation in Chinese-Javanese couples. The informants in this study are Chinese-Javanese couples who have been married for more than ten years. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The results of this study found four main aspects in the marital adaptation process in Chinese-Javanese couples: Cultural adjustment, conflict management, intimacy and egalitarian principles. The further implication of the success of the adaptation process is the sustainability of marital relations in the long term.

Keywords: *Chinese-Javanese Couple, Interethnic Marriage, Marital Adaptation*

Abstrak. Perkawinan antar etnis memiliki tantangan dalam proses adaptasi karena adanya perbedaan budaya, stereotip dan prasangka antar etnis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dinamika adaptasi perkawinan pada pasangan Tionghoa-Jawa. Informan dalam penelitian ini adalah pasangan Tionghoa-Jawa yang telah menikah lebih dari 10 tahun. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan empat aspek utama dalam proses adaptasi perkawinan pada pasangan Tionghoa-Jawa, yaitu: penyesuaian budaya, manajemen konflik, keintiman dan prinsip egaliter. Implikasi lanjutan dari keberhasilan proses adaptasi adalah keberlangsungan relasi perkawinan dalam jangka panjang.

Kata kunci: *Adaptasi Perkawinan, Pasangan Tionghoa-Jawa, Perkawinan Antar Etnis*

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Introduction

Indonesia is a pluralistic country that consists of various ethnicities. In its plurality, there are ethnic descendants of other nations who have lived in Indonesia for generations and are part of Indonesian citizens, one of which is ethnic Chinese. In general, ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are descendants of the Chinese who migrated and settled in Indonesia and married fellow ethnic Chinese and ethnic natives (Harahap, 2020; Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018).

From the beginning, the arrival of ethnic Chinese was well received by the indigenous population. This then encouraged cultural acculturation between ethnicities. Chinese ethnic migrants acculturate to the local culture by learning and using the local language, especially in working and conducting trade transactions (Harahap, 2020). Because they have been able to adapt and acculturate, many of these migrants then chose to settle down and marry indigenous women (Nurda, 2020).

Sadun (in Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018) revealed that the history of Chinese-Javanese marital relations stems from the arrival of ethnic Chinese in the archipelago, which occurred in three major migration waves. The first wave of migration occurred in the 14th century, dominated by sailors who conducted trade transactions. They settled in areas around the coast, married local women, and underwent complete acculturation with the indigenous population. The second wave of migration occurred in the 17th century, triggered by wars and famine during the transition from the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. In this second wave, migrants arrived with their families and religious leaders and tended to exclude themselves from the local culture. The third wave of migration occurred in the early 20th century due to the outbreak of the nationalist revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. The working class dominated the migrants in this third wave. Hence, as in the first wave of migration, mixed marriages with natives were also common (Sadun in Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018).

During the Dutch colonial period, particularly in the early 20th century, policies were issued by the Governor of the Dutch East Indies to widen the gap between ethnic

Chinese and ethnic natives, which resulted in increased stereotyping and prejudice between the two ethnicities. Under the policy, ethnicities in Indonesia were divided into three social castes. White ethnicities, namely Europeans, occupied the highest social caste. The second social caste is occupied by foreign eastern or yellow-skinned ethnicities, such as Arabs, Chinese, and Indians, while indigenous ethnicities occupy the lowest social caste (Harahap, 2020; Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018).

Although since the independence era, inter-ethnic casteization has no longer been enforced in the social life order in Indonesia, inter-ethnic stereotypes as a legacy of the colonial era appear to be still inherent today. According to Suryaningtyas and Weningtyastuti (2018), indigenous people have a stereotype that the Chinese tend to be stingy, exclusive, opportunistic, and not nationalistic. However, this stereotype is not entirely true because many Chinese people still have a nationalist attitude and care about various social problems that occur in Indonesia (Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018). Stereotypes related to Chinese-Javanese inter-ethnic marriage also existed in ancient society. For the ancient Javanese community, inter-ethnic Chinese-Javanese marriages were not expected and were even believed to bring disaster in the future (Carey, 1984). In contrast, the Chinese community has a stigma that most Javanese men tend to be wasteful, poor, and unfaithful to their partners (Yulianto, 2015).

Amid negative stereotypes between the two ethnicities, the trend of Chinese-Javanese marriages has increased due to the opening of inter-ethnic communication in Indonesia, and Chinese who have long settled in Indonesia were given the freedom to choose citizenship after independence (Dewi, 2017; Patriantoro, 2019; Suryaningtyas & Weningtyastuti, 2018). However, cultural differences lead to different perspectives on the marriage relationship itself. Patriantoro (2019) argues that ethnic Chinese families in Indonesia themselves are divided into 'totok' Chinese families who still strictly observe Chinese cultural traditions, requiring their descendants to marry fellow ethnic Chinese, and Peranakan or mixed Chinese families who are more moderate in their thinking and no longer strictly observe the

obligations of their cultural traditions, including in marriage. In contrast, families of Javanese ethnicity view that a mate is God's will (Pratama & Wahyuningsih, 2018). In other words, Javanese ethnic families tend to surrender their marital life to God. In addition to different perspectives on marriage, married couples must adjust to the spouse's extended family based on their interests, culture and values (Hurlock, 2003). Success in the cultural adaptation of a husband or wife is generally one of the most essential factors in a successful marriage.

In general, couples in inter-ethnic marital relationships have the potential to experience obstacles in the adaptation process due to cultural differences, including different traditions, customs and beliefs of each ethnicity (Uyun, 2023). In addition, conflict in inter-ethnic marriages can be caused by differences in communication patterns and norms of each culture, as well as the tendency of withdrawal, anxiety, ethnic prejudice, domination, racism, ethnocentrism and culture shock (Rahardjo & Gono, 2022). Conflicts in the inter-ethnic marriage process certainly require conflict resolution efforts to understand each other to ensure the perpetuation of marital life. Conflict does not always have a negative impact if appropriately handled (Rahardjo & Gono, 2022). In this case, good communication will be instrumental in building intercultural assimilation and eliminating ethnocentrism (Bakara et al., 2020).

From the explanation above, given that Indonesia is a multiethnic country that opens up many opportunities for interethnic marriages, further exploring the dynamics of marital adaptation in Chinese-Javanese couples is interesting. The context of Chinese-Javanese marital relations is the focus of this study because amid cultural differences that exist, as well as the negative stereotypes still inherent today between the two ethnicities, the dynamics of couples in making marital adaptations are worth exploring in depth.

Method

This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. According to Smith (2009), phenomenology is a type of approach in

qualitative research that aims to explore experiences from a first-person perspective. In general, this study aims to explore the dynamics of adaptation in Chinese-Javanese couples.

The criteria for research informants were determined using a purposive approach. According to Poerwandari (2011), informants in a purposive approach are not selected randomly but based on certain specific criteria. The criteria for informants in this study are: 1). Couples who live in Chinese-Javanese marital relationships, namely one couple of ethnic Chinese husbands and ethnic Javanese wives and one couple of ethnic Javanese husbands and ethnic Chinese wives; 2). Have been married for at least ten years to be able to explore the adaptation process over a long time; 3). They have declared their willingness to be consciously and voluntarily involved in the research process with their spouses as evidenced by signing an informed consent.

The primary data collection method used in this research is in-depth interviews with a semi-structured form that uses the technique of preparing interview guidelines, according to Tobing (2022). The interview guide contains questions based on Clayton's (1975) marital satisfaction theory. Data analysis in this study used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) techniques following the rules of phenomenological qualitative data analysis, according to La Kahija (2017). The recorded interviews were written into the transcripts, and the essential data were categorised. Important data that have close meaning are categorised and abstracted into superordinary themes. From these themes, further interpretative analyses can be conducted. Specifically, this study uses relational couple analysis to get a comprehensive picture of the marital relationship in question so that the results of the husband and wife's analysis become one unit and complement each other.

Result

Background of Research Informants

Informant Background of Couple 1 (Chinese Husband-Javanese Wife)

Couple 1 consists of a Chinese husband, Mr AA (51 years old), and a Javanese wife, Mrs BB (47 years old), who have been married for 26 years and have two children. Mr AA works as an employee in a private company, while Mrs BB is a housewife. Initially, they met at a cassette shop where Mrs BB worked when she was single. Mr AA was a loyal customer at the shop. After dating for approximately two years, they decided to get married. During the first five years of marriage, couple 1 lived at Mr AA's parents' house. Therefore, there were some dynamics in cultural adjustment, particularly in Mrs BB's gaining acceptance from Mr AA's siblings. After passing the fifth year of marriage, they moved into their own house until now.

Informant Background of Couple 2 (Javanese Husband-Chinese Wife)

Couple 2 consists of a Javanese husband, Mr CC (39 years old), and a Chinese wife, Mrs DD (40 years old), who have been married for 13 years and have three children. Mr CC works as a pastor in a Protestant Christian church, while Mrs DD works as a cake seller. When getting married, Mr CC faced rejection from Mrs DD's parents because Mr CC's profession as a pastor made him doubt his financial capability. However, Mr CC proved the sincerity of his love for Mrs DD so that he finally received the approval of Mrs DD's parents. Mrs DD previously lived in Jakarta and experienced culture shock when she moved to Palembang with her husband. This was due to the very different environment compared to her hometown.

Aspects of the Findings

The results of the research on couple one and couple 2 found vital aspects that will be explained as follows:

Cultural Adjustment

In couple 1, Mr AA, who is Chinese, liked the characteristics of Javanese people from the beginning because they tend to be obedient, accepting, and undemanding. On the other hand, Mrs BB, who is Javanese, has liked the characteristics of Chinese

people since she was young because she was impressed by Mandarin movies, coupled with the positive impression she felt when working with Chinese people:

"I noticed that Javanese people are ... what is the name, accept what is, surrender. That could also be my benchmark, not demanding." (Mr AA)

"I like Chinese movies, I like Chinese movies. Then I happened to work with Chinese people at that time. The Chinese people are quite nice. So, what, my love for Chinese people increased." (Mrs BB)

When they were in a serious dating relationship, Mrs BB's biological mother disapproved of the couple's relationship because she had a negative stigma about Chinese people. However, over time, Mrs BB's biological mother finally approved of their relationship:

"Only, if it's the mother who 'Why should it be with Chinese people?' She said. 'Chinese people are bad.' she said. Then she also said, 'What are Chinese people like to get married, haha...' She said, 'Later you, later you will be cheated on, haha...' like that. In the mother's view, maybe she saw like that, saw my sincerity that oh yes, as long as ... for a long time, right, because it's not just once I also invited Mr AA to the house several times, maybe from there she saw, oh yes it turns out that what, indeed he can accept you even though you are Javanese." (Mrs BB)

At the beginning of the marriage, Mrs BB was worried that her husband's extended family would reject her because of her Javanese background. However, Mr AA's biological mother viewed Mrs BB as a good wife, loving her parents and accepting her parents as they are:

"Especially from my mother, she just accepts it. In fact, she considers my wife to be a good one, nice to talk to and so on, does not argue, loves my parents and accepts my parents as they are." (Mr AA)

"Okay, when there was a commitment to get married, they were okay too. They seemed to accept it. I come from the village, from this, from people, Javanese people, what are they in my view? In my eyes, they accept, accept me." (Mrs BB)

In the early years of her marriage, when she was still living with her husband's extended family, Mrs BB received negative views from her sister-in-law, who thought she was being excellent only for ulterior motives. Although she found it difficult to prove that she was not what she was accused of being, Mrs BB continued to show a conciliatory attitude and was kind to her brothers-in-law:

"My wife is a yielding person. For example, the bathroom is one. Sometimes, they go first, and she waits. Sometimes, I make a fuss and get angry, hehe. I'm also not happy with how it's accompanied. How come it's controlled, it's only left with the remnants of water for washing and so on, cooking too, right?" (Mr AA)

"What is a problem or that is actually after the marriage is from this family, from what, from the siblings, the siblings of Mr AA, there are some people who they are, like what, hmm ... maybe their view is that what if I do something if the Palembang term is looking for a face, looking for a face, what, looking for a face, wanting to look for the face, looking for the face with parents." (Mrs BB)

After the first five years of marriage, the couple finally chose to separate from Mr AA's extended family. Mr AA felt more comfortable and calm after living separately from the extended family because he could avoid conflict with his siblings, while according to Mrs BB, their move to their own house was due to the desire to live independently:

"It's better for me to be separated because if you join it, it will be noisy. The family must be independent. I have experienced how many years from marriage until my child was how old ... Yes, the first child. My second child has subsidised the purchase of a house, and I renovated it. I made it an independent life." (Mr AA)

"We want to move because we want to be independent, it's about time. Every household can't stay mixed like that for too long. That's not good either. Indeed, we do have plans to move house, not because I am depressed or that, it's not." (Mrs BB)

In general, cultural differences in couple 1 have implications for differences in habits and views in daily life. However, after 26 years of marriage, the couple has familiarised themselves with cultural differences. On the other hand, Mrs BB considers conflicts and gaps due to cultural differences relatively small. According to her, adaptation is mainly done because of the differences in each other's traits:

"But I'm used to being told, yes, my wife is used to it, 'Oh if you are Chinese, you have to be like this.' She already knows. She works with Chinese people, too. So she knows a lot, hehe, so there's no difficulty for her. She lives with Chinese people, so she knows everything." (Mr AA)

"Yes, if it's nature, it seems that the nature, one is hard, the other is soft, it's a bit difficult. If the nature of your husband is your manual, you pattern yourself what your husband is like. If you want something nice or something perfect, it's not like that. You have to match. If, for example, he is fire, and you are fire, then there will be a fire. If it's this, you have to know, this, if it's me, my husband is

really hard, harsh, and angry. Oh, that means I have to be gentle. I have to be water for my husband.” (Mrs BB)

In contrast to couple 1, couple 2 had started adapting to each other while still in a romantic relationship. This allowed them to get to know and understand each other before marriage. The process made them both prepare themselves to face all the consequences of married life:

“We’ve been dating for six years, hmm... not much adaptation. At the very least, I already have an idea of what my wife is like, my future wife with the character that she has. Yes, there must be new things in marriage. At least, I already knew seventy per cent when I was dating her. That’s why I have a principle with her of dating for a long time to be able to know each other. Dating and marriage are a thin difference. There must be basic principles hmm ... what’s the name, so the difference is, once again, it’s readable when dating. Only when we get married are we ready to accept the consequences that he gives.” (Mr CC)

“At first, I was the youngest of four siblings. I didn’t have any younger siblings, while he had many younger siblings, four younger siblings, right? I became the first child, automatically, the first daughter-in-law ... yes, learning for the first time to have in-laws. When we first started mixing living together, I knew I was ready because I was married to a pastor. I have to live in the church. Indeed, people think I don’t want to live with my in-laws.” (Mrs DD)

At the beginning of the marriage, both Mr CC and Mrs DD faced challenges in adapting due to the differences in thoughts, habits and characters with the couple's extended family who are of different ethnicities:

“Chinese is, sorry, racist, racist for sure. Even friends who are not Chinese, ‘Ah, this color.’ That’s what they must say. I understand that, it was racist when I first met. There must be rejection, ‘Ah, my candidate item.’ There must be this, but for me, I respond, I love ... ‘Ah I love your child, so why bother?’ I can prove that I predict that I am the best son-in-law. You can just give feedback to my wife. I am the most beloved daughter-in-law compared to other genuine Chinese daughters-in-law. I am not a pure Chinese daughter-in-law, I am half and half. I am the most loved, and my presence is most anticipated.” (Mr CC)

“The in-laws are good. In the past, it wasn’t bad, and it was a process of adaptation. For example, my in-laws are his first children, and he has my son-in-law for the first time. So, there is a term: foreigners enter, we clash, right, different thinking, different what is it, different daily life. I’m a blunt person, and my in-laws are calm, and they speak slowly.” (Mrs DD)

After the first four years of their marriage, Mr CC and Mrs DD eventually moved into their own home, separate from their family of origin to develop a healthier marital relationship and support the better development of their children:

"When the clash happened, we decided to move to buy a house here. We lived here for four years because I thought there were so many siblings, and they all lived together. Oh, we can't, I said, because it's not healthy for our marriage in the future. We have to leave. Yes, in the future, we will return to the church. We never know because the successor of the church is only the Father. For the sake of a healthy marriage and good children's development, we have to leave." (Mrs DD)

To this day, Mr CC continues to live the values of Javanese culture daily and also shows tolerance towards Chinese cultural traditions. In contrast, Mrs DD no longer strictly follows Chinese cultural traditions because she has prioritised religious factors in her daily life:

"The Javanese values I hold are respect for my parents and teaching my children well. Never go against your parents. That's the absolute law. You give your opinion, and papa accepts it, but if you oppose it, papa will be very angry. Javanese people respect their parents very much. Even if we're wrong, we can't attack them directly. With friends, too, if they're wrong, don't attack them directly. Ethics anyway, ethics especially I teach him if from the Chinese element, what is it, most of the Chinese traditions we follow if it's about Chinese New Year, what's mam? You can't sweep, you can't close the door." (Mr CC)

"The previous one is the most that is not very strict because my family is not like that because my parents are all Christians. If yes, most dead people are white. On most birthdays, I cook noodles and red eggs. I don't pray anymore. Every sincia wears red clothes. For example, like at birth, if it's a girl, what shape, if it's a boy, what shape, not something like that." (Mrs DD)

Conflict Management

In dealing with conflict, couple 1 chooses to remain silent when their partner is angry and give them time to calm down:

"For me, the term fuss is normal, sir. For example, in the morning, it is noisy. If I am noisy, I stay quiet, don't talk much, don't want to be reprimanded. I leave the house, refresh myself first, then return as usual." (Mr AA)

"If, but we often experience that if I'm the one who gets angry, I'm the one who gets angry. I'm ranted at, I'm scolded, I stay quiet, I'm a quiet person, at first I was quiet, I ranted. Because if I know the nature of my husband, if he's angry

with something I made, it's that mistake. If he's angry, if I get angry too, he's not done with it. So I keep quiet, I keep quiet, I keep quiet." (Mrs BB)

According to Mr AA, the key to conflict resolution is openness in communication and apologising to the partner. This was confirmed by Mrs BB, where Mr AA always precedes to apologise:

"Yes, the most important thing is to apologise if I'm wrong, that's the key to family is to accept each other, yes there are no secrets, open, open and realise each other oh my weakness is like this, his weakness is like this. That's the key. So, don't be selfish." (Mr AA)

"He is the one who always apologises first. He's the one who always apologises." (Mrs BB)

Over time, Mr AA experienced a change in his emotional state where he has been able to reduce his temperamental and selfish nature, which previously was often a source of potential conflict:

"So it was me. Yes, I was still young, so emotions and selfishness were still high. The older we get, the more we think, 'Oh, don't do this, don't do this', we should go with it. So gradually we realise that yes, we are like this, our condition is like this, so what else is there to fuss about, different opinions and so on. Unless I wanted to win by myself when I was young, now I think what is there to make a fuss about." (Mr AA)

Similar to couple 1, when facing problems with their spouse, couple 2 also builds open communication and compromises to find solutions. Under certain conditions, couple 2 needs a pause to calm down and find the right moment to build communication and resolve conflicts:

"So, to be honest, what do I want whenever there is a conflict? I want this: I want to find the middle. We have a time when he gets angry and doesn't want to talk to me. Yes, I don't want to talk for one or two days, but I will discuss the third day nicely. The more we go here, the more we're like that. If I'm angry, instead of talking bad, I don't talk. I let it go until I get to the point where I'm like, 'I mean this, you mean that', it doesn't connect. Sometimes if we talk, we fight, we don't connect, but talking instead of keeping quiet becomes a bitter root, a wound. So, our conflicts have to be resolved. We don't hang on to conflicts, no, they have to be resolved no matter what." (Mr CC)

Mr CC considers that he has gone through a maturation process in marriage so that he is increasingly able to be calm in overcoming conflicts with his partner:

"Once, when I was immature, I was bored because I didn't talk. Because I kept learning, I kept quiet, I gave in, I was bored, it was wrong. I said, 'I want this, I like this, I want this, I want this, do you accept it?' If you don't accept it, what is the reason? We talk about it. Communication was the main thing in the past, but now, for the last five years and ten years, no, there is no ten years, for the last five years, I enjoy it, I fight, but it gets sorted out." (Mr CC)

Intimacy

Couple 1 takes advantage of certain moments to tell each other stories, exchange ideas, and talk about problems in everyday life:

"Yes, most of the time during these vacations, it's just the two of us. Sometimes, we tell stories. While having lunch, while nyenack, moments like that, if I have a problem, the first thing I do is confide in my wife, ask her opinion, what's good, I ask her opinion, hehe. I don't want to take the risk myself because we are husband and wife, so we must exchange ideas." (Mr AA)

Since the beginning of marriage, couple 2 has also built intensive daily communication:

"We're already married. We make Pillow time to chat. But now it's a bit difficult because there's a little one who can't be noisy. If we're in the car going somewhere, we chat there. It's possible we can't be as intense as before because of the little one's factor. He's just stuck with his mommy. Although we try to communicate, although it's not as rich as it used to be, maybe there will be more time to talk if he goes to school. I don't like the types who type in WA. I'm the type who likes to chat directly to meet because sometimes I don't call, sometimes I cook while telling stories, sometimes anything is told, it's clear." (Mrs DD)

Couple 2 seemed to enjoy being with their family. This togetherness allows couple 2 to complement each other and become a strength in living the marital relationship:

"We are a couple who fill each other up. You are empty, I fill. I'm empty, you fill, it's the same. We just do it. There are problems. There must be. There is a process, there must be, but the basic principle is the strength until today." (Mr CC)

"We like to gather. It's not that I don't like other people, but if you ask me who I like to go with, I prefer to go with my core family." (Mrs DD)

Egalitarian Principle

Couple 1 demonstrates the egalitarian principle or upholds equality between men and women. In this case, Mr AA takes part in doing daily household chores. This was also confirmed by Mrs BB:

"If I intervene, when I was a child, I scrubbed the clothes, the uniform, I washed the clothes. Until now, if I have nothing to do, I wash and dry the clothes. So, there's no such thing as, 'Oh you have to do this. The wife cooks.' Sometimes, he does it himself. If he doesn't have time, I do it. It's not scheduled, no. As long as I can do it, I do it. As long as I can do it, I'll do it." (Mr AA)

"If what helps is washing clothes, washing clothes, washing clothes, the husband often does it until now. That's more household chores that are easy for men to do, yes, if it's washing clothes, whether washing clothes with a brush or a machine, it seems that men are more what, more able, more what is easier." (Mrs BB)

In couple 2, Mr CC also holds egalitarian principles in dividing household tasks. Despite growing up in a patriarchal culture, Mr CC chooses not to demand that his wife always obey his wishes and has an awareness of the principle of equality between husband and wife:

"I also have this principle. You're a wife, you have to submit to your husband, you drive him, I like it, no. He has a heart, he has rights, he has a right. He has a heart, and he has rights. He has the freedom to decide what he wants to say. He's a human being that we have to respect, we have to love. So I'm not, no, very polite to her. I respect her as my woman." (Mr CC)

Discussion

This study aims to explore the picture of marital adaptation in Chinese-Japanese couples. From the results of this study, a comparison was obtained between couple 1 with a Chinese husband and a Japanese wife and couple 2 with a Japanese husband and a Chinese wife. From the abstraction of interview themes, four main aspects of both couples were obtained: cultural adjustment, conflict management, intimacy, and egalitarian principles.

Regarding cultural adjustment, it appears that Japanese individuals tend to be more sensitive to intercultural stereotypes. This can be seen from the efforts of the wife's family in couple 1, who are Japanese, in restraining their daughters from marrying Chinese men. This was done because of the view that Chinese men tend to

be evil and unfaithful to their partners. This is because Javanese families tend to be more protective of their daughters than their sons (Adrianto, 2006). Personally, the husband in couple 2, who is also of Javanese ethnicity, perceives that Chinese families tend to be racist towards Javanese people, so he initially felt less accepted in his wife's extended Chinese family. In this case, the first thing that needs to be stopped in the process of inter-ethnic marriage adaptation is the development of stereotypes into prejudice and discrimination. This is because stereotypes are very likely to lead to the formation of prejudice against different ethnicities and are a source of racism, discrimination, and interethnic conflict (Augoustinos & Reynolds in Nurrahmi & Putra, 2019).

Over time, the stereotypes of Javanese ethnicity towards ethnic Chinese in both couples seemed to fade. Relationships that are well-established and positive over time, both with the couple and the couple's extended family, slowly decrease the inter-ethnic stereotypes. Interpersonal experiences and good communication with ethnic Chinese can eventually eliminate these negative stereotypes (Nurrahmi & Putra, 2019). In other words, each party must make particular efforts to eliminate inter-ethnic stereotypes. This is important because cultural adaptation in inter-ethnic marriages generally requires more significant effort than in same-ethnic marriages (Pramudito, 2017).

On the other hand, the family, especially the Chinese parents, seem to accept the presence of Javanese in-laws well. This is because negative stereotypes are not found in Chinese families towards Javanese ethnicity. The Chinese parents of both couples seemed to accept the Javanese son-in-law well from the start. This is because ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have generally been able to make cultural and social adaptations well with indigenous people (Harahap, 2020). In addition, the two Javanese informants, the wife in couple 1 and the husband in couple 2, always treat their partners and their families well, accept them as they are, and do not make many demands on their partners. This attitude and treatment made the two Javanese informants considered the best and most beloved sons-in-law by their respective in-

laws compared to other sons-in-law who are Chinese and more demanding of their partners.

What was problematic in the marital adaptation process of both couples was that the wife had to live in the same house with the husband's extended family in the early years of marriage. In couple 1, social jealousy by the husband's siblings due to the wife's Javanese ethnicity being seen as the favourite daughter-in-law rather than other Chinese ethnic daughters-in-law became a polemic. In couple 2, the problem occurred when there were differences in parenting between the wife and the husband's parents. The problems in both couples resulted in the decision to move to their own homes. This was done to build a healthier marital relationship and ensure better child development. This is in accordance with Noviasari and Dariyo's (2016) statement that when a woman lives with her in-laws, she may feel pressured because she has to simultaneously carry out the roles of child, mother and wife in everyday life. In such conditions, the decision taken by both spouses to move to their own homes is the right decision because it can have a positive impact on a healthier marital relationship.

On the other hand, separating the spouses from their families of origin can encourage success in marital adaptation because the forms of relationships and relational problems faced in the extended family in one house after marriage are much more complex than the nuclear family relationships. As a result of the flourishing cultural adjustment, each side of the couple has shown tolerance to each other by supporting and observing the other's cultural traditions. This is done by both partners, especially in celebrating feast day.

Conflict management is also an essential part of marital adaptation in Chinese-Javanese couples. What is noteworthy about both couples is that the Chinese spouse, the husband in couple 1 and the wife in couple 2, appear to be more temperamental than their Javanese counterparts. In contrast, the Javanese couples, the wife in couple 1 and the husband in couple 2, appear more patient, tend to give in when arguing and choose to remain silent when their partners are expressing their anger. This

difference can be interpreted positively because it indicates a character balance between the parties. In this case, the patient partner can compensate and reduce the partner's temperament when in conflict. After emotions subside, both partners can open communication and compromise to find solutions. Thus, it can be said that both partners have a compromising conflict management type. In this compromising conflict management, couples try to find a middle ground for both parties and then agree on it (Rahim in Cheng, 2010).

The compromising conflict management type is ideal among other conflict management types because it focuses on problem-solving. Conflict management can be done because both couples are currently at the middle adult stage of development. Individuals are generally more emotionally mature in middle adulthood because they have learned to accept and manage emerging emotions (Papalia et al., 2009). In line with this, Hatch and Bulcroft (2004) found that older couples argued less frequently than younger couples. In addition, both partners have been married for more than ten years. They have undergone a relatively long process of adaptation and relationally learnt to understand their partner better and change themselves over time.

Cultural adjustment and constructive conflict management positively impact the intimacy of both partners. Intimacy is built by establishing open and intensive communication and building closeness in daily life. Intimacy with a partner that is established through intensive and open communication between partners can build partners' trust in each other (Pramudito & Minza, 2021), and being together with a partner can bring happiness (Pramudito et al., 2021). Thus, intense communication and closeness impact both partners' stronger emotional and relational attachment.

In the adaptation process, the egalitarian principle, shown in equal views and treatment of partners, can also imply that couples can adapt to each other and strengthen the marital relationship. One example of the implication of the egalitarian principle owned by both spouses is the division of household tasks between husband and wife. In this case, the husband does not demand the wife to do all household

tasks but also participates in it. Although they come from the same patriarchal culture, husbands in both couples see their wives as having equal rights and positions with them, which results in them respecting and loving their wives as they should.

In general, the implication of the successful process of marital adaptation in Chinese-Javanese couples is to ensure the sustainability of marital relations in the long term. When different ethnic couples can adapt in their marital relationship, it can impact the acceptance of the partner. In addition, successful adaptation has further implications for marital satisfaction, where adaptation is one of the main aspects of marital satisfaction (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

Conclusion

This study found four main aspects in the process of marital adaptation in couples: cultural adjustment, conflict management, intimacy and egalitarian principles. In making cultural adjustments, couples need to build good interaction and communication to understand their partner's habits and traits increasingly. In addition, constructive conflict management efforts are needed occasionally with a compromising type of conflict management. Intimacy can be built from intensive communication and being with your partner daily. The principle of egalitarian or equal rights and positions between husband and wife must also be built to support the success of the Chinese-Javanese marriage adaptation process.

Suggestion

Suggestions for future research are to explore specifically the quality and satisfaction of marriage in inter-ethnic marital relationships. In addition, religious factors were not the focus of this study. Therefore, marital relations between different ethnicities and religions can be an interesting dynamic to explore further in future research. Lastly, since this study uses a couple analysis (husband and wife together), an examination of the individual side (husband's or wife's side partially) can also be done in future research.

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