

Culture Shock Intercultural Wedding in North Serpong District, South Tangerang City

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of culture shock in intercultural marriages in North Serpong District. The focus of the research is on the communication dynamics of couples with different ethnic and regional backgrounds in managing differences in values, traditions, and interaction styles. This research uses a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews and analyzed using pattern-matching techniques and cross-case synthesis, with reference to the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory developed by William B. Gudykunst. The results of the study show that couples experience adaptation stages that follow the U-curve pattern, namely honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. The crisis phase is the most vulnerable point, characterized by clashes in verbal communication styles, differences in work values, and extended family interventions. Uncertainty arises in the form of difficulty predicting a partner's responses, while anxiety manifests as emotional tension and recurring conflict. The recovery process takes place through negotiation of meaning, self-disclosure, and the formation of mutual agreements as strategies to reduce uncertainty. At the adjustment stage, couples build a hybrid family culture that integrates the positive values of each cultural background. The heterogeneous and individualistic urban environment in North Serpong also accelerates the adaptation process due to the lack of external social intervention. This research extends the concept of culture shock to the domestic-interpersonal realm and provides practical implications for strengthening intercultural communication literacy in multicultural.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a meeting space for two individuals with cultural backgrounds who carry their own value systems and communication patterns. In communication science, intercultural marriage is often associated with differences in nationality. However, in the context of a pluralistic Indonesia, significant cultural differences are often found within the internal scope of the same ethnicity but different regions of origin, as happens to Chinese interethnic couples with different sociocultural backgrounds (sub-ethnic or regional).

Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are often considered a single, homogeneous group by the wider community. In fact, internally, there is very contrasting cultural diversity among ethnic Chinese from various regions in Indonesia. For example, ethnic Chinese from Java (such as Semarang, Solo, or Surabaya) generally have undergone a deep acculturation process with the local culture, so they tend to adopt a subtle, indirect communication pattern loaded with the value of *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance or social hesitation) (Februandari 2023; Gao 2021). On the other hand, ethnic Chinese from North Sumatra (especially Medan) tend to have a more straightforward communication pattern, a more assertive vocal tone, and still maintain a strong regional language dialect (Hokkien-Medan) in daily interactions (Marlim et al. 2025).

This difference often triggers the phenomenon of culture shock in the household. Although administratively they fall under the same ethnic umbrella, differences in “cultural logic” in communication often create uncertainty (Greene 2017; Hromadžić et al. 2015). A Chinese-Javanese couple may perceive the speech style of a North Sumatran Chinese couple as a form of aggression or anger, while a North Sumatran Chinese couple may perceive the communication style of a Chinese-Javanese couple as a lack of openness or as overly indirect.

North Serpong District in South Tangerang City is a highly relevant area in which to observe this phenomenon (Fatma et al. 2016; Fitri et al. 2023; Saifullah et al. 2017). Modern residential areas in North Serpong, such as Alam Sutera and its surroundings, have become major destinations for urban ethnic Chinese from various parts of Indonesia to settle (Purwaningsih et al. 2024; Singh n.d.). The high concentration of Chinese residents from diverse regional backgrounds in this area creates a significant interregional meeting space, which ultimately increases the likelihood of intercultural marriages within the ethnic Chinese community.

The culture shock experienced in marriage covers various dimensions, ranging from differences in family traditions and parenting styles to conflict management. If interpersonal communication patterns are not properly managed through identity negotiation, these differences can trigger psychological tension and disharmony (Van Kleef et al. 2018; Sulaeman et al. 2023; Tili et al. 2015). Therefore, this study aims to explore more deeply how ethnic Chinese couples from different regional backgrounds in North Serpong District manage communication barriers and overcome culture shock to achieve mutual understanding.

North Serpong District in South Tangerang City is a real representation of the dynamics of modern urbanity in Indonesia. As a fast-growing area, it is dominated by upper-middle-class residential developments such as Alam Sutera and Graha Raya, making it a melting pot for individuals from various ethnicities and sociocultural backgrounds. Geographically, this area of 22.46 km² is directly adjacent to Tangerang City to the north and Tangerang Regency to the west—a strategic position that further strengthens the mobility of its heterogeneous population. Based on the latest statistical data, the population in this subdistrict reaches 145,190 people (South Tangerang, n.d.), a figure that reflects both density and a high intensity of social interaction in domestic and public spaces.

Diversity in North Serpong is also reflected in the composition of religious adherents and the available worship infrastructure. Data indicate that the majority of the population is Muslim (105,387 people), followed by Protestant Christians (18,444 people), Catholics (14,836 people), Buddhists (6,051 people), and Hindus (393 people). The presence of 50 mosques, 93 prayer rooms, as well as various churches and temples spread across subdistricts such as Paku Jaya, Jelupang, and Pakulonan, emphasizes the identity of this region as a multicultural environment. Ethnically, although dominated by Javanese, Sundanese, and Betawi groups, North Serpong has a significantly higher concentration of Chinese and expatriate populations than other areas in South Tangerang, which increases the probability of intercultural marriages.

This population dynamic is also accompanied by a relatively well-established educational profile. There are 115 educational institutions serving more than 30,000 students, reflecting an information-literate society with strong access to higher education. However, intellectual maturity is not always directly proportional to the ability to navigate communication barriers in intercultural marriages. Based on records from local authorities,

marriage-related activities in this region remain dynamic; in 2025, 598 individuals accessed religious affairs services related to marriage.

From the perspective of communication science, this phenomenon can be examined using the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory developed by William B. Gudykunst. He argues that interactions with “strangers”—in this case, couples from different cultural backgrounds—inherently create anxiety and uncertainty in message interpretation. A partner’s inability to manage this uncertainty often leads to culture shock. In line with this, national communication expert Alo Liliweri emphasizes that in intercultural communication, differences in cognitive schemas can lead to failures in constructing shared meaning, which, within the context of marriage, can trigger persistent conflicts related to domestic roles and child custody.

Although residents of North Serpong generally possess strong social capital and educational backgrounds, they remain vulnerable to acculturation stress. (Ward et al., 2001) explain that challenges in cultural adjustment often result in significant psychological distress when individuals fail to negotiate their cultural identity with their new environment or life partner. Differences in conflict management, speech styles, and traditional family values can trigger culture shock, which—if not mediated through effective communication patterns—may threaten family cohesion and harmony amid the fast-paced urban life of South Tangerang.

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing divorce rate in South Tangerang, which is often rooted in communication disharmony. Data from the Tigaraksa Religious Court (which covers the South Tangerang area) show an increasing trend in divorce filings among young urban couples, reaching 2,104 cases caused by various issues such as economic problems, online gambling, or infidelity (with disputes and continuous quarrels as dominant factors) (divorce increases, there are 6,113 new widows in Tangerang throughout 2025, n.d.). In the context of cultural differences, culture shock is no longer merely a feeling of discomfort but becomes a major obstacle in the formation of a stable marital identity (third-culture building). This communication failure often culminates in legal separation.

This study employs a case study approach to explore in depth how couples in North Serpong interpret their cultural differences. As explained by (Creswell & Poth, 2018), case studies allow researchers to uncover unique details of individual experiences that are often overlooked by statistical data. The phenomenon of divorce here is viewed as the culmination of accumulated failures in anxiety and uncertainty management in everyday interactions (Gudykunst, 2005 in (Griffin et al., 2023)).

In addition, the urban environment of North Serpong, which tends to be individualistic and competitive, further increases pressure on intercultural couples. The lack of social support from extended families (due to living abroad or in exclusive residential areas) means that couples must resolve internal conflicts independently, without cultural mediators. This aligns with the Communication Accommodation Theory proposed by Howard Giles, where a failure to adjust communication styles (divergence) accelerates relational alienation between partners (Gallois & Giles, 2015).

The importance of this research is also grounded in the need to map communication coping strategies for intercultural couples in metropolitan buffer zones. The phenomenon of divorce in North Serpong suggests that stable economic and educational factors alone are insufficient to sustain a marriage without strong intercultural communication literacy. This

study is expected to contribute practically to marriage counselors and sociologists in understanding the anatomy of culture-based conflict in the modern era.

Theoretically, this study seeks to update the discourse on culture shock, which is typically associated with international migration, by situating it within the domestic-interpersonal realm (marriage). A qualitative perspective allows the voices of married individuals to emerge, particularly in identifying turning points at which cultural differences shift from being perceived as unique to being perceived as threats. This aligns with the view (Wood, 2020) that communication is a process that shapes relational reality, not merely a tool for exchanging information. This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of culture shock in intercultural marriages in North Serpong District, South Tangerang City, focusing specifically on how couples from different cultural backgrounds experience uncertainty, anxiety, and adaptation in their communication processes. It also seeks to identify the stages of adaptation they undergo and the strategies they use to manage differences in values, traditions, and interaction styles. The findings are expected to enrich the study of intercultural communication in the domestic-interpersonal domain and provide practical insights for couples, marriage counselors, and family practitioners in strengthening intercultural communication literacy and fostering healthier multicultural family relationships.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative methodology with a multiple-case study approach to explore the dynamics of intercultural communication and culture shock among couples in North Serpong District. This research applied a multiple-case study design to compare several intercultural couples from different ethnic backgrounds, aiming to identify similarities and differences in managing anxiety and uncertainty. In addition, an embedded case study design was used by analyzing not only the couple as a unit but also individual perspectives (husband and wife). This approach strengthened the validity of the findings through cross-case analysis and triangulation, enabling a deeper understanding of communication patterns and cultural adaptation processes.

Data analysis in this study was conducted continuously from the data collection phase to the conclusion-drawing stage. Using a multiple-case study design, the main analytical strategies were pattern matching and cross-case synthesis based on Yin (2018). Interview transcripts were first validated through member checking to ensure accuracy, then organized into a case study database. The data were subsequently coded to identify key themes related to Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, such as anxiety, uncertainty, and mindfulness. These coded data were then categorized into broader themes, including phases of cultural crisis, uncertainty reduction mechanisms, and strategies for achieving relational harmony. Finally, cross-case synthesis was applied to compare findings across cases, allowing the researcher to identify common patterns and differences and to draw more robust conclusions about how intercultural couples in North Serpong managed culture shock in their domestic relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis showed that all informants experienced non-identical adaptation dynamics, but generally followed a U-curve pattern. This curve illustrates that

initially individuals are in a positive phase, then decline due to cultural clashes, and finally achieve stability through the process of adaptation.

'1. Analysis of the Stages of Culture Shock of Different Cultures

The process of cultural adaptation in inter-regional marriages in North Serpong District was found to follow a dynamic phase pattern. Based on primary data, this stage is not only influenced by interpersonal interaction, but also by sociogeographical factors in the urban North Serpong region.

a. Honeymoon Stage: Fase Euforia and Optimisme Pre-Marital

At this stage, couples tend to ignore cultural differences and focus on emotional compatibility. A long courtship period is a key factor why this phase feels so positive.

Informant I (Mr. Chris Ekalaya- Java and Sastriyati Chinese South Sumatra) stated that cultural differences are not positioned as the main variable in marriage decision-making. He explicitly stated that responsibility and work ethic are the main indicators in choosing a partner, while tribal and cultural aspects are placed as the "umpteenth factor".

Theoretically, this condition can be described as a process of *selective perception*, in which individuals focus on attributes that reinforce emotional commitment and ignore potential value conflicts. In this phase, couples build optimism based on shared goals, not the same cultural background.

Furthermore, the second marriage experience for Informant I shows comparative *cognition*—that is, an evaluation of previous experiences that reinforces the belief that harmony is determined more by personal qualities than ethnic background. This causes the honeymoon phase to be relatively stable because it is not accompanied by cultural identity anxiety.

"For me, actually, cultural differences, cultural differences, ethnicities or whatever it is is the umpteenth factor that I see is that the man wants to do anything, wants to take responsibility for anything without he having to feel ashamed to do the job. So my hope is that my second husband has a greater sense of responsibility. Far from what I imagined, I meant to put aside the actual problem of differences. And this second marriage we lived safely and felt free because we were both free from feeling different because I didn't feel like I had to adapt to new people and from Mas Chris is also an easy going person and not rigid."

Informant II (Mr. Andreas – Javanese and Mrs. Anthea – Chinese): Explained that the process of introduction during dating made them feel "safe".

"Yes, of course everything... We have a process of identifying dating times, right? So when we are dating, we already know each other's characters, what it feels like, there are characters that are... We must be different, yes, different tribes must be different, different ways. I happen to be quite far away, 7 years apart, so there must be a difference. The point is, we can get through it all. Because they already know each other, when the courtship process is over, what kind of character each one is, like that."

The couple emphasized that the courtship period has become a space for "simulated adaptation" before entering marriage. He stated that through this process, the character of each has been recognized so that differences are no longer considered a threat.

This phenomenon can be analyzed as *anticipatory adjustment*, which is the initial adaptation process that occurs before the individual fully enters the new cultural system. However, adaptation at the courtship stage tends to be partial because:

Interaction is still in a controlled social space.

It has not been fully exposed to the large family value system.

There has not been a formal pressure on the role of husband and wife.

Thus, the sense of "security" in this phase is relative and has not been tested by the structural dynamics of the household.

Informant IV (Mr. Rido Pasaribu - Batak and Mrs. Ririana Chinese Bangka): The long duration of courtship (± 3 years) in Informant IV (Mr. Rido - Batak & Chinese Wife Bangka) shows that the couple has gone through a gradual stage of character recognition.

"I have been with my wife for three years. Yes, because basically my wife and I also accept the cultural differences.

However, interestingly, in the quote, the initial indications of culture shock have begun to appear:

Although maybe it was shocking at first because I was also from a big family and my wife was also from a big family too. So yes, there are also many demands, comments must be from either parents or other siblings. So how do I bridge it, yes, the strategy must be communicated. We agree on what we have to agree to do because yes, if we really love the person we love, whether we like it or not, we have to live with the big difference."That is why

This suggests that the honeymoon phase in the context of intercultural marriages is not completely sterile from tension. The difference lies in **the intensity and management of meaning**. Conflict is still interpreted as a negotiable challenge, not a threat to relations.

Crisis Phase: The Peak of Culture Shock

In this phase, respondents in North Serpong showed that *culture shock* was most strongly triggered by differences in verbal communication styles.

Informant I Mrs. Sastri stated that at this second wedding, she felt safe and put aside the problem of cultural differences.

"Actually, when facing this, the culture still exists because my second husband is actually still of Javanese descent and looks not too far from my first husband. It's just that my second husband is more willing to listen to my input."

Informant II Mr. Andre stated that the minor of the debate was meaningful

"Actually, for our family, for Chinese culture and Javanese culture, we still carry out family traditions, which is a culture that we cannot leave. It just so happens that we don't really question the problem. If we celebrate the Chinese New Year we also continue to celebrate, if Javanese culture itself does not have a special celebration. So it's actually not a big problem, household problems are very minor for different cultural problems."

Informant III (Mrs. Ardini) stated that culture shock caused by a third party, namely the husband's extended family, had a big impact when this couple was still living together and this was contrary to Mrs. Dini's personality.

"If it's from his family, yes, it's thick, it's still thick. It's just that from his personality, the Nias himself, he's not so thick. Ignore him. But, if it was from his parents, it just so happened that for about seven years of marriage, I still lived with my in-laws. The real Pontianak is really like China. It was quite a bit of a shock as well."

Informant IV Pak Rido explained that the harsh Batak background met the outspoken Chinese culture of Bangka which triggered a significant conflict at the beginning of the

marriage. This is in line with **Moleong's opinion** that the reality of the subject's experience is influenced by the sociocultural background brought by birth.

"Yes, there are still people who are trying to fix it. Well then I got married, I got married in 2016. It means about 9 years, 10 years of roading."

"In the early days, yes. Neither me nor my wife. When it was the first time it was the end, yes we were each other. Early times. So, for example, there is a Batak event, yes because he doesn't want to. Yes, I'm on my own. At least later, when asked if the wife's family is at home again, rest and rest. And vice versa. Because I don't and still have an ego, I don't want to. It's alone again. My wife went to their big family."

Recovery Stage Phase as Contemplation after Couples Experience Cultural Shock.

After going through repeated conflicts, couples begin to realize that confrontational communication patterns are unproductive. The recovery phase is characterized by the emergence of awareness to negotiate meaning and form common rules.

Some informants mentioned the existence of an explicit agreement that was formally formulated as a conflict control mechanism. The agreement serves as a sign in living a cross-cultural domestic life. From a communication perspective, this action is a form of institutionalized agreement to reduce uncertainty.

At this stage, the cultural ego begins to be lowered. Couples no longer place the tradition of origin as the only standard of truth, but rather begin to consider the couple's perspective. This process shows an increase in empathy and perspective-taking skills.

Theoretically, the recovery phase shows that couples are beginning to be able to keep anxiety within optimal limits. They are no longer dominated by a sense of threat, but begin to see differences as something negotiable.

Informant I (Mrs. Sastri – Bp Chris) stated:

"The name is a household, there are two people who are united in it, indeed with different characteristics. Actually, there is often friction because I want it to be like this, then it turns out that my husband wants it to be different. Well, usually when something like that happens, there has started to be friction, but usually from that friction there must be some kind of quarrel first, then later I will be listened to by my husband. But maybe in the end it's my opinion that will be used."

Informant II (Mr. Andreas – Mrs. Anthea)

".. Everything we come back again, yes, we apply what is good, yes that's what we apply. In the family, there are sometimes traditions that we say are toktok, even though the ones that end up making us argue, but so far it hasn't been that big. Indeed, we can compete with each other. Still be able to accept yes. Sometimes we also back each other up, for example, there are traditions and customs in my family, which my wife may be a bit stiff, how does she adapt, yes, I cover it up, so it's as if I'm protecting her. And vice versa, if there are Javanese cultural traditions that I don't understand, or maybe I'm also confused about how to do it, yes, it's a cover, so we cover each other. Yes, although there may be problems, but they are very small, not too much to the point of becoming a big problem."

Informant III (Mrs. Ardini – Mr. Deni) :

"Well, so it's a coincidence, yes, I don't know either, this is our age. We are millennials, aren't we? We are millennials. So, I don't know, it's because of the age factor too, right, or how, the two of us are too relaxed for the customary problem. We don't want to bother

with that. It's more like, oh but, like this, if there are customs that are too complicated, which is like like most myths or something, it's just that we're both stupid. So, we don't want to follow customs that are too complicated. Either from my nias tribe, or his vampire. We don't really follow that. Maybe it's because we're not really parents either. So, take it easy, sir."

Informant IV (Mr. Rido – Mrs. Ririana):

"Okay. Indeed, yes, back to what I said yes. The first year did have a lot of conflicts. Actually, that was my first child. If the Batak people actually have something like seven months, yes. Just like maybe in Java there is also that. It's just that we don't do it. Because my wife didn't want to do that either. So because you have to follow the customs, right. Seems like it has to be distracting. Then it was like being given rice in his hair what were all sorts of things. Seven months. Well, so it is. For example, if you don't want to. Yes, at least I didn't want to force my wife at that time. The first years, right. So, yes, I do. We finally agreed that. Now the second child has just started. For example, it is like events for Batak. To bless the child, for example. Now that's starting to be the beginning to want to follow everything that is told. From the family. Well, indeed, from my side, I also have to talk slowly. By the way, you have to be given some understanding. Because if he doesn't, he doesn't understand what it is. Why should it be done. So in the first year I tried to communicate, to give understanding. So did my wife. I asked what the purpose was this. For example, there are Chinese events. Why does it have to be like this, why is that. Oh this is the goal, that goal. So we understand each other. Oh because if the goal is good, then why don't we do it. Yes, unless the purpose is unclear, for example. Indeed, there are events that are actually not necessary. In the end, it is mostly ugly, for example. Or even it's like a waste of money, just waste it. Even though it is not very important. For example, yes, we don't do that."

Adjustment Stage: Integration and Harmonious Formation

The final stage identified is the adjustment phase. At this stage, the couple is no longer just compromised, but has formed a stable new pattern of interaction. Some informants stated that significant changes were felt after the third to fifth year of marriage.

The main feature of this phase is acceptance. Acceptance does not mean eliminating the cultural identity of origin, but integrating it within the cultural framework of the new family. The values that were considered positive from each tradition were retained, while practices that were considered irrelevant were adapted or abandoned.

This process leads to the formation of a hybrid family culture. In this context, the family no longer fully represents the culture of the husband or wife, but becomes a cultural entity in its own right.

Informant I (Mrs. Sastriyati – Bp Chris)

"Obviously, there is that for this agreement and agreement, it is more about our agreement as parents, so parenting, parenting agreements, such as educating children with two different cultures in our way, which we consider good, we will apply it and if there are bad differences to apply to our family, we will remove it, yes, so that harmonious conditions will be created."

Informant II (Mr. Andreas – Mrs. Anthea)

"Yes, actually it's more, I think more about the children, because later they will ask anyway, am I a Javanese or a Chinese tribe? Yes, I said both, because Papi is of Javanese descent, Mami is of Chinese descent, so yes you like it or not, you are called Chinese, so there is no longer you are originally Chinese, you must be said to be blaseran, mixed up. Actually, it's more about the children, how they can finally adapt to the environment, to their friends, to their families as well. And I think that's really important for us to be able to put ourselves wherever we are."

Informant III (Mrs. Ardini – Mr. Deni)

"It's significant, yes or it's just the same, until now, those who are more than 5 years old are just normal because if Deni is the one, if Deni is indeed the soft spoken level now, yes, so in the early days, the soft spoken is at 10, now because I am the one who is constantly hard spoken, maybe he will be shaken too, yes, sir, so the soft spoken is 10 So minus 9 is probably because of me, because of me, not because of him, so it's because I'm the one who started it, so he's a card."

Informant IV (Mr. Rido – Mrs. Ririana)

"In the third year, our communication has started to improve quite a bit. It's started to accept each other, that's the communication. Then the year, yes, it's really okay for us to communicate it when the second child is born. Around the fifth year, the sixth year. Now that we have started to go through all phases, we are already quite good. Well, the change that is quite significant is indeed if each of us is indeed the way the language of communication has begun to improve. So the words that may be from the family's upbringing or from childhood until she grows up, that's also the environmental influence of the wife's family. Or if it's me, it's quite influential. So there are indeed things that are scraped away that are negative at that time. Then yes, then the new things that we agreed on so that our communication has started to improve very well in years five to six."

Contextual Factors Influencing Culture Shock

Third Party Factors: Large Families

In the Honeymoon Stage, the intervention of extended families has not been felt as significant pressure. Relationships are still interpersonal. But some informants are beginning to realize the existence of cultural expectations:

IV Reports:

"I and my wife have been with me for three years. Three-year courtship, introduction to his family. Well, indeed, when dating, you must not have seen everything. Still taking care of everything. His family has also not been seen. Well, then after getting married, there are quite a lot of differences, yes because I am from the Batak tribe and my wife is from China, China Bangka. So there was indeed a disagreement between my parents and my wife's parents."

In the Crisis Stage, the Crisis Stage shows the most dominant role of the extended family.

Emerging forms of intervention:

- I. Demands of traditional rituals.
- II. Standards for son-in-law.
- III. Expectations of how to speak and behave.
- IV. Expectations of how to speak and behave.

Informant III (Mrs. Ardini)

"The rules of customary terms are also brought. It still exists. Well, sometimes that's what makes me personal, what is it? Because I never knew before that there was a rule like this, it turns out. Because in Chinese tradition it is like this. Suppose this is a short time ago (Chinese New Year). One day before sincia (Chinese New Year), it is not allowed to be called sweeping, mopping, all kinds of things are not allowed. Meanwhile, I am a very, very clean person, sir. I can't see the dirty floor, I can't. How to anticipate it? I can't look at a dirty house, but on the other hand, my in-laws have a custom that is not allowed to be cleaned from H-1 sincia (Chinese New Year). Until tomorrow morning, until tomorrow afternoon, how about the D-day? That's it. So according to the in-laws, no broom should be taken out. Behind the door is not allowed. No, you can't. What is taken out is not allowed. How about the one (intimate call) I said to her husband. How do you anticipate it? You can't. I can't see anything like that that is so messy, I can't see anything like that. Yaudah. We use a vacuum. Oh yes, yes, yes. It's like we don't drag the house. Not sweeping. Don't hold a broomstick. The garbage is still there, the dust is still at home. Still at home. But we are a vacuum. Is that possible? Oh. Yes, you can. Yes, that's one example. And accepted by the extended family, huh? Accepted as well received. If it's in a vacuum, it's still okay as long as you don't bring a broom into the house. Pull it out. No, you can't. That is what it is."

Informant 4:

"He (the wife) was shocked. But actually in my wife's home environment, it is indeed all Batak Community. So I often join the Batak people so they like to listen to the songs. But it must have been a shock at first."

Okay. Indeed, yes, back to what I said yes. The first year did have a lot of conflicts. Actually, that was my first child. If the Batak people actually have something like seven months, yes. Just like maybe in Java there is also that. It's just that we don't do it. Because my wife didn't want to do that either. So because you have to follow the customs, right. Seems like it has to be distracting. Then it was like being given rice in his hair what were all sorts of things. Seven months. Well, so it is. For example, if you don't want to. Yes, at least I didn't want to force my wife at that time. The first years, right. So, yes, I do. We finally agreed that. Now the second child has just started. For example, it is like events for Batak. To bless the child, for example. Now that's starting to be the beginning to want to follow everything that is told. From the family. Well, indeed, from my side, I also have to talk slowly. By the way, you have to be given some understanding. Because if he doesn't, he doesn't understand what it is. Why should it be done. So in the first year I tried to communicate, to give understanding. So did my wife. I asked what the purpose was this. For example, there are Chinese events. Why does it have to be like this, why is that. Oh this is the goal, that goal. So we understand each other. Oh because if the goal is good, then why don't we do it. Yes, unless the purpose is unclear, for example. Indeed, there are events that are actually not necessary. In the end, it is mostly ugly, for example. Or even it's like a waste of money, just waste it. Even though it is not very important. For example, yes, we don't do that."

Social Environmental Factors: North Serpong District

Uniquely, the results of the study show that the heterogeneous environment in North Serpong sub-district tends to help accelerate the Adjustment phase. The informants agreed that the "individualist" nature of the environment makes the couple have high privacy and avoid environmental or neighbor intervention, so they are more focused on resolving culture shock internally.

Informnan I:

"From the environment, there is no interference, there is no intervention, so it is more about household affairs, it is their own business, if it is not here. Yes, unless it is in a residential area like the house of an ordinary resident, it is not a complex of love. Maybe if things like that in the first marriage are the same, there is nothing like that. Maybe it would be different if we lived outside the area in my opinion. In the village, it's not like in the house complexes. Which if we know, in this complex, they are neighbors from morning to night so they rarely interact with neighbors."

They report II:

"Actually, if it is intervention, as long as we are solid, husband and wife have no problems, I am grateful, we are committed and have parents who are not too involved in our respective households, so we are indeed grateful to have a good family."

Table 1. AUM Theory Analysis Coding (Gudykunst)

| Variable AUM | Communication Indicators | Manifestations in Research Findings |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Uncertainty (Ketidakpastian) | Cognitive confusion, difficulty predicting a partner's response. | Mba Sastri felt confused (uncertain) facing the attitude of the first partner who was considered too relaxed compared to her persistent standards. |
| Anxiety (Kecemasan) | Emotional tension, fear of failure/divorce. | The statement of the Head of KUA regarding couples who come with high emotions and fear of the destruction of their marriage due to differences in principles. |

Source: Processed by the researcher based on William B. Gudykunst (2005)

Teori Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM)

The theory of *Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM)* developed by William B. Gudykunst focuses on how individuals manage anxiety and *uncertainty* when interacting with strangers or individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In the context of intercultural marriage in North Serpong, the "foreigner" is a single living partner who carries a system of symbols and norms that is not fully understood.

Dimension of Uncertainty

Uncertainty is related to the inability of individuals to predict or explain the behaviors, attitudes, and values of couples who come from different cultural backgrounds. Informants take various strategies to reduce this uncertain cognition.

- A. Proactive Strategy through the Introduction Period: Informants II and IV use the courtship period as an instrument to map the couple's character to minimize uncertainty in the future. While other informants feel that they do not have a problem and do not have any strategy so that there is acceptance.

Informan II:

"Yes, of course everything... We have a process of identifying dating times, right? So when we are dating, we already know each other's characters, what it feels like, there are characters that are... We must be different, yes, different tribes must be different, different ways. I happen to be quite far away, 7 years apart, so there must be a difference. The point is, we can get through it all. Because they already know each other, when the courtship process is over, what kind of character each one is, like that."

IV Reports:

"Yes, so according to what we agreed, yes, we will live it at most. So don't violate. There are agreements that we have to make, yes, that's where we bridge. So we can go through it all."

They report I:

".....And this second marriage we lived safely and felt free because we were both free from feeling different because I didn't feel like I had to adapt to new people and from Chris is also an easy-going person and not rigid."

Informant III experienced a reduction in uncertainty when the couple's personal reality broke the existing cultural stigma. **the Battle of the**

"This is the problem. From the side of the two of us, we are both relaxed. But, because I live, we both live with in-laws, so like it or not, he has rules too.

The rules of his customary terms are also brought. It still exists. Well, sometimes that's what makes me personal, what is it? Because I never knew before that there was a rule like this, it turns out."

"But yes, it turns out that it is not, it is not the same, in terms of his nature, yes, from the nature of his husband, it is not in accordance with his culture, the person, his personality. Because it turns out that he is, the calmer person. The speech is also softer, soft spoken in today's language. So Deni is a very softSpoken person. So if he is, indeed he is actually, if he is from the lineage, he also exists, the descendants of the Dayak tribe actually, that's what it is, what is Dayak like, that's from the side of his father. But no, personally, he's very, very gentle, very gentle, compared to me."

Transformation of the Culture Shock Phase in Couples in North Serpong

Based on the findings of the study, each couple experiences a unique *phase of culture shock* but still follows a linear pattern of cultural adaptation. Researchers found that the *crisis stage* is the point where communication dynamics are at the most crucial level.

From Euphoria to Communication Crisis

In the early phase of marriage (*Honeymoon Stage*), informants such as Pak Andreas and Pak Rido tend to ignore cultural differences due to the presence of a high emotional attraction factor. However, as time goes by, the difference between verbal and non-verbal codes begins to surface. This phenomenon is in line with Oberg's theory which states that the crisis phase arises when individuals begin to realize that the communication symbols they carry from the culture of origin are not always understood equally by their partner.

(Mulyana, 2018) *culture shock* bukan sekadar masalah perasaan, melainkan masalah negosiasi makna. Ketidaksiapan dalam menghadapi gaya bicara yang lugas menimbulkan persepsi negatif yang memicu konflik. Sebagaimana dikemukakan oleh (Mulyana, 2018)),

komunikasi antarbudaya sering kali terhambat oleh etnosentrisme, di mana seseorang menilai perilaku orang lain berdasarkan standar budayanya sendiri.

Recovery and Adjustment

The study found that the recovery period usually occurs after the second to fifth year of marriage. Mr. Rido mentioned that their relationship "improved significantly in the fifth year." This shows that there is a new communication code learning process. In this phase, the couple begins to form what is called a *third-culture building*, where they no longer use original cultural standards (Batak or Bangka), but instead create new standards that are mutually agreed upon.

AUM Theory Analysis: Managing Uncertainty and Anxiety

The *theory of Anxiety/Uncertainty Management* (AUM) emphasizes that the key to the success of intercultural communication is the ability to manage *uncertainty* and anxiety.

Reducing Uncertainty through Openness

Uncertainty arises when the informant cannot predict the partner's response. Mba Sastri, for example, experienced cognitive uncertainty when faced with her husband's attitude that was "too relaxed" compared to her "persistent" work culture. This uncertainty triggers semantic disruption in everyday interactions.

(Gudykunst, 2005) *self-disclosure*). Dengan menceritakan latar belakang budaya masing-masing secara sadar, mereka berupaya menurunkan level ketidakpastian. Menurut , komunikasi yang efektif tercapai ketika individu memiliki kesadaran ((Gudykunst, 2005) *mindfulness*) untuk terus mempelajari perbedaan tanpa memberikan penilaian instan.

Managing Anxiety with Formal Mediation

One of the most interesting findings in this study is the role of KUA Serpong Utara in managing partner anxiety. High emotional anxiety often leads to the threat of divorce. The findings of **the "Written Agreement on Stamps"** show a very practical and institutional form of anxiety management.

Theoretically, this agreement serves as a tool to create stability and certainty. When verbal communication is *gridlocked*, the written document becomes a predictable behavioral guide for both parties. This is the embodiment of a conscious effort to reduce *anxiety* for the sake of the continuity of the household system.

The Context of the North Serpong Environment in Cultural Adaptation

North Serpong District, especially in areas such as Melati Mas, has the characteristics of a heterogeneous urban society and tends to be individualistic. The findings of the study show that this environment is actually a supporting factor for couples of different cultures.

Mba Sastri explained that the individualistic nature of the complex environment makes them avoid the intervention of extended family or neighbors which often exacerbates *culture shock*. In rural areas, outside interference with marriage traditions is very strong, but in North Serpong, couples have full autonomy to determine their own household cultural identity. This speeds up the *adjustment process* because the focus of problem solving is only in the hands of the husband and wife.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that intercultural couples in North Serpong District experienced culture shock as a dynamic and fluctuating process aligned with the U-Curve adaptation model, in which the crisis stage was primarily triggered by differences in communication styles (high-

context vs. low-context) and work values, while the adjustment stage was achieved through ongoing negotiation of meaning and the formation of a shared third-culture. The study also found that the management of anxiety and uncertainty was carried out through mindfulness strategies, with a distinctive practice emerging in which couples used formal agreements through the local KUA (e.g., written agreements on stamped documents) to establish cognitive clarity and emotional stability during communication breakdowns. Additionally, the heterogeneous and individualistic urban environment of North Serpong contributed positively by minimizing external social pressures, allowing couples to focus on internal conflict resolution. Future research is recommended to explore intercultural couples in different socio-geographic settings or to examine the long-term effectiveness of formal and informal communication strategies in sustaining marital stability.

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