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Addressing Cultural Value Discrepancies Between Madura and Java in Interethnic Family Engagements: A Review of Existing Literature.

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Abstract

This study investigates the cultural disparities between Madurese and Javanese ethnic communities and how these disparities affect harmony within interethnic families. As a highly multicultural nation, Indonesia is home to a wide array of ethnic groups, languages, and cultural traditions — a reality that brings both richness and complexity to everyday social life. The Madurese and Javanese represent two communities whose core characteristics differ markedly, especially in terms of how they communicate, how they perceive self-worth, how they organize kinship, how they practice religion, and how they approach economic life. These contrasts frequently become the root of friction in interethnic family settings, yet scholarly attention to this specific issue remains sparse. Through a qualitative library research approach, this study synthesizes findings from 23 academic sources — including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and institutional research reports — to: (1) map out the cultural differences between the two groups that hold the potential to trigger conflict; (2) examine applicable conflict resolution strategies; and (3) describe how successful conflict resolution shapes interethnic family harmony. Findings indicate that effective strategies include cultural negotiation, communication adjustment, mediation involving extended family and community leaders, the cultivation of hybrid identities, culturally-informed counseling, mutual compromise, and multicultural learning within the home. When these strategies are successfully applied, the benefits reach well beyond the household: marital bonds are deepened, children's growth is nurtured, extended family ties are strengthened, healthy cultural blending is encouraged, social cohesion is advanced, and Indonesia's cultural heritage is preserved. The study ultimately affirms that interethnic families who navigate their cultural differences well become living proof of Indonesia's aspiration to be both diverse and unified.

Keywords

Cultural value conflict, Madura, Java, interethnic family, conflict resolution, intercultural communication.

Introduction

Indonesia, as a country rich in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, harbors significant potential for conflict when two different ethnic groups interact intensively. This diversity, which should be a source of

national wealth, often becomes a source of friction, especially when differences in cultural values are not managed properly. A concrete example of this phenomenon is the interaction between the Madurese and Javanese, the two largest ethnic groups in eastern Indonesia, which possess starkly contrasting cultural characteristics (Wiyata, 2020).

The Madurese are known for their direct, assertive, and expressive communication style, and they place a very high value on self-respect—a concept known in their tradition as *carok*—a form of defending one's honor that can lead to physical violence if someone feels humiliated in public (Wiyata, 2020). Meanwhile, Javanese society places great emphasis on politeness, refinement, and social harmony (*rukun*) in their interactions, with values such as *andhap asor* (humility) and *ewuh pakewuh* (a sense of reserve) dominating their communication patterns (Suseno, 2021). These fundamental differences in communication, concepts of honor, kinship structures, religious practices, and economic orientations make interactions between these two ethnic groups prone to conflict, particularly within the most intimate and personal bonds—namely, interethnic families (Afrizal, 2020).

Although there have been many studies examining conflicts between the Madurese and Javanese ethnic groups in public spaces such as markets, workplaces, and communities (Rudyansjah, 2022), research that specifically highlights the dynamics of cultural value conflicts within families resulting from interethnic Madurese-Javanese marriages remains very limited. In fact, the family is the primary environment in which cultural values are passed down and where cultural differences are confronted in a more personal and emotional way (Heriyanto, 2021). Conflict within the family not only impacts the relationship between husband and wife but also affects children's psychological development, relationships with extended family, and even contributes to broader social harmony (Nasution, 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth examination of three main aspects. First, this study identifies fundamental cultural differences between the Madurese and Javanese ethnic groups that have the potential to cause conflict in interethnic families, including patterns of communication and emotional expression, concepts of self-esteem and honor (*carok* vs. *siri*), kinship structures and gender roles, religious practices, as well as economic orientation and work ethic (Sutopo, 2022). Second, this study analyzes various conflict resolution strategies that can be applied to address conflicts between Madurese and Javanese cultural values within a family context, ranging from cultural negotiation and intercultural dialogue (Ting-Toomey, 2021), the theory of communicative accommodation (Gallois et al., 2021), mediation by extended family members and traditional leaders (Rosyidi, 2020), hybrid identity development (Heriyanto, 2021), culture-based counseling (Sue & Sue, 2021; Supratiknya, 2020), compromise and expectation management (Masykuri, 2021), to multicultural education within the family (Muhaimin, 2020). Third, this study describes the implications of conflict resolution for family harmony across ethnic lines, including implications for the quality of marital relationships, children's development and identity, relationships with extended family, cultural adaptation and acculturation, broader social cohesion, as well as the intergenerational reproduction and transmission of culture (Rudyansjah, 2022).

Using a qualitative approach through a literature review, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and practical understanding of how Madurese-Javanese interethnic families can constructively manage cultural differences. The findings of this study are expected not only to be theoretically useful for the development of intercultural communication and conflict resolution studies but also to serve as a practical

guide for interethnic families, family counselors, community leaders, and policymakers in fostering harmony amid diversity—in line with the spirit of “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,” which serves as the foundation of the Indonesian nation (Liliweri, 2022).

Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a library research design. This method was chosen because it allows for a deep review of existing literature on cultural conflicts between Madurese and Javanese ethnic groups in interethnic families, without the need for fieldwork. A qualitative framework works well for exploring cultural values, social norms, and conflict strategies that are deeply rooted in community life.

To gather relevant sources, a systematic search was carried out across several academic platforms, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, institutional repositories, and peer-reviewed journal portals such as SINTA, DOAJ, and Scopus. The keywords used included Madurese and Javanese cultural values, interethnic conflict, intercultural marriage, conflict resolution, carok, unggah-ungguh, andhap asor, communication accommodation, hybrid identity, and acculturation. Only publications from 2000 to 2022 were prioritized to maintain relevance.

Sources were selected based on clear criteria. They had to directly address cultural differences between Madurese and Javanese people, conflict dynamics in interethnic relationships, resolution strategies, or their impact on family harmony. Materials were excluded if they did not specifically focus on the Madurese-Javanese context, only discussed public conflicts without family implications, or lacked academic credibility.

In total, 23 academic references were used, including peer-reviewed journals, books, and research reports from well-known scholars. Some of the key authors cited are Afrizal (2020), Banks (2020), Gallois et al. (2021), Heriyanto (2021), Koentjaraningrat (2020), Liliweri (2022), Nasution (2022), Rifai (2021), Rudyansjah (2022), Suseno (2021), Ting-Toomey (2021), Wiyata (2020), and Woodward (2020).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process included four stages: (1) reading all materials carefully to get a full picture, (2) identifying key themes related to cultural differences, conflict resolution, and family implications, (3) grouping these themes into three main areas that match the research questions—cultural differences, resolution strategies, and implications for family harmony, and (4) synthesizing the findings to draw meaningful conclusions.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied four quality criteria: credibility through source triangulation, dependability by maintaining a clear and consistent process, confirmability by grounding interpretations in the data, and transferability by providing enough context for readers to decide if the findings apply to other situations.

Findings & Discussion

Cultural Differences Between the Madurese and Javanese Ethnic Groups That Could Lead to Conflict in Interethnic Families

Cultural differences between the Madurese and Javanese ethnic groups are one of the main factors that can lead to friction in interethnic family interactions. These distinctions encompass belief systems,

methods of communication, societal frameworks, cultural traditions, and notions of self-worth, which vary greatly between these two cultural groups..

1. Communication Patterns and Emotional Expression.

One of the striking differences between Madurese and Javanese cultures lies in their communication styles. Javanese people are known for their culture of indirect communication and place great emphasis on politeness in speech. The concepts of *andhap asor* (humility) and *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance or discomfort) are the dominant patterns of communication in Javanese society (Suseno, 2021). Meanwhile, the people of Madura tend to use a more direct, assertive, and expressive communication style when expressing their feelings and opinions (Wiyata, 2020).

These differences in communication styles have great potential to cause misunderstandings in the context of interethnic families. Javanese partners may interpret the direct communication style of Madurese people as rude or impolite, while Madurese partners may view the indirect communication style of Javanese people as dishonesty or an attempt to avoid problems (Liliweri, 2022). In Afrizal's (2020) study on the dynamics of interethnic communication in Indonesia, it was found that differences in communication styles are the most common source of conflict in cross-cultural families.

2. The Concepts of Self-Respect and Honor (Carok vs. Siri)

Madura culture is closely tied to the concept of "carok," which refers to the act of defending one's honor—an act that can lead to physical conflict if someone feels humiliated in public (Wiyata, 2020). For the Madurese, honor is not merely a personal value but a collective identity that encompasses the entire family and community. Meanwhile, Javanese culture places greater emphasis on "siri," which involves maintaining social harmony (rukun) and avoiding open conflict.

In the context of interethnic families, these differences in the concept of self-esteem can be a source of serious conflict. When a family member of Madurese ethnicity feels humiliated, their response may differ significantly from how a Javanese person would respond to a similar situation. Variances in the management of insults or negative feedback frequently result in avoidable intensification of disputes among family members (Rudyansjah, 2022).

3. Kinship Structures and Gender Roles

The Madurese kinship system is bilateral but exhibits a strong patrilineal tendency, particularly regarding the inheritance of property and decision-making (Rifai, 2021). Men in Madura possess considerable power within the family unit, and critical choices typically lie with the male leader of the home. This system differs from Javanese culture, which, although also patriarchal, exhibits a more egalitarian approach to the division of gender roles within the household (Koentjaraningrat, 2020).

These differences in gender role expectations have a significant impact on interethnic families. A Javanese woman who marries a Madurese man may face cultural pressures that differ from those she has known since childhood. Conversely, a Javanese

man who marries a Madurese woman may face different expectations from his wife's extended family regarding his roles and responsibilities (Heriyanto, 2021).

4. Religious Practices and Religious Values.

Despite the fact that both the Javanese and Madurese are mainly followers of Islam, their ways of practicing the faith have notable differences. The Madurese are recognized for their profound commitment to Islamic beliefs, which significantly influence their daily social customs. The *kyai*, or religious leaders, hold a powerful social position in Madurese society (Rozaki, 2020). Conversely, Javanese Islam frequently blends with indigenous traditions (*kejawen*), though in recent years, the presence of "reformist" Islam has increased (Woodward, 2020).

These differences in religious practices can spark conflict within interethnic families, particularly regarding how children are raised, which religious rituals are observed, and to what extent the authority of the *kiai* is recognized in family decision-making (Muhaimin, 2020).

5. Economic Orientation and Work Ethic.

The Madurese people are known as a group with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and high economic mobility. The culture of *merantau* (starting a business outside one's home region) is deeply ingrained in the social identity of the Madurese people (Rifai, 2021). Meanwhile, Javanese society has traditionally been more oriented toward job stability and social status recognized by the community, although this pattern is also changing with modernization (Sutopo, 2022).

In interethnic families, these differences in economic orientation can lead to conflicts regarding financial management, spending priorities, and decisions about where to live (whether to settle down or move in pursuit of business opportunities) (Liliweri, 2022).

Strategies for Resolving Conflicts Between Madurese and Javanese Cultural Values in the Family Context

Resolving cross-cultural conflicts within a family context requires a comprehensive approach that is sensitive to both cultural systems involved. Various strategies can be implemented to reduce and resolve conflicts arising from differences in Madurese and Javanese cultural values.

1. Cultural Negotiation and Intercultural Dialogue.

Cultural negotiation is a conflict resolution strategy that focuses on each party's ability to understand, respect, and find common ground between two different value systems. According to Ting-Toomey (2021), in the context of intercultural conflict, the ability to engage in cultural negotiation depends heavily on each individual's level of "cultural intelligence"—that is, a person's capacity to understand and adapt to cultures different from their own.

In Madurese-Javanese families, cultural negotiation can take place through open dialogue about the differences in expectations and values held by each partner. This process requires both parties to be willing to question cultural assumptions that have

long been considered “normal” and to seek a mutual understanding that is acceptable to both sides. Masykuri’s (2021) research indicated that interethnic partnerships that partake in cross-cultural discussions experience greater marital happiness compared to those that refrain from such interactions.

2. Communication Accommodation Theory.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), introduced by Giles (in Gallois et al., 2021), provides a structure for analyzing how people modify their ways of communicating when engaging with different cultures. This theory is particularly applicable to Madurese-Javanese families as it elucidates how adapting communication can facilitate cultural understanding and enhance relationship quality.

In the context of interethnic Madurese-Javanese families, communication adjustment may manifest through employing a shared language or dialect, altering the directness of conversation, and recognizing varying communication approaches as legitimate without criticism (Liliweri, 2022). When Javanese family members comprehend that Madurese directness should not be interpreted as anger, and when Madurese family members realize that Javanese politeness is not synonymous with deceit, significant reductions in communicative misunderstandings can occur.

3. Mediation Involving Extended Families and Traditional Leaders.

In Indonesian society, especially in Java and Madura, the larger family unit is crucial in resolving internal disputes. As noted by Rosyidi (2020), the practice of “family deliberation,” which includes respected elders from the extended family, serves as a powerful traditional means to alleviate ethnic disputes. The involvement of a third party respected by both sides can help defuse tensions and find a fair solution for all parties.

In the context of Madurese-Javanese families, mediation may involve traditional leaders or religious figures who understand both cultures. The role of the *kiai* in the Madurese community and that of the “*sesepuh*” in the Javanese community can be maximized as effective mediators, as they are respected by members of their respective communities and possess the moral authority to suggest peaceful solutions (Suseno, 2021).

4. The Development of Hybrid Identity.

The concept of hybrid identity in the context of interethnic families refers to the process in which family members do not have to choose one cultural identity over another, but rather develop a new identity that integrates the best elements of both cultures (Bhabha in Rutherford, 2021). This approach is particularly relevant in Madurese-Javanese families, where conflicts are often triggered by the perception that one culture must “prevail” over the other.

The development of hybrid identity in interethnic families can be facilitated through various practices, such as celebrating the traditions of both cultures alternately, creating new traditions unique to the family, and teaching children to appreciate the cultural heritage of both parents (Heriyanto, 2021). Research by Nasution (2022) shows that

interethnic families that successfully develop a hybrid identity experience lower levels of conflict and have stronger family cohesion.

5. Culturally-Based Premarital and Family Counseling.

A culturally sensitive counseling approach is becoming increasingly relevant in addressing cross-ethnic family conflicts. According to Sue & Sue (2021), effective multicultural counseling must take into account the clients' cultural context, including the values, beliefs, and cultural practices that shape how they view conflicts and their resolutions.

Premarital counseling for couples from different ethnic backgrounds can help identify potential cultural conflicts before they arise and equip couples with the necessary cross-cultural communication skills. In the Indonesian context, culturally-based family counseling that integrates modern psychological approaches with local wisdom has proven to be more effective than counseling based purely on Western theories (Supratiknya, 2020).

6. Compromise and Expectation Management.

A compromise strategy in resolving cultural conflicts does not mean that both parties must abandon their cultural identities, but rather negotiate areas where adjustments can be made and areas considered "non-negotiable" for each party. In a Madurese-Javanese family, for example, decisions regarding the language used at home, how to raise children, or how to celebrate religious holidays all require mutually agreed-upon compromises.

Managing expectations is a crucial component of this strategy. Conflicts often arise not because of the differences themselves, but because of unrealistic expectations that partners from different cultures will behave exactly like members of their original cultural communities. When family members learn to manage their expectations more realistically, the intensity of conflicts can be significantly reduced.

7. Multicultural Education in the Family.

Multicultural education in the context of interethnic families is important not only for children but also for parents and extended family members. Multicultural education aims to build awareness, understanding, and appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as to develop the intercultural competencies needed to interact effectively with family members from different cultural backgrounds (Banks, 2020).

In the context of Madurese-Javanese families, multicultural education can be realized by sharing stories about the traditions and values of each culture, visiting the communities of origin of each partner, learning the partner's regional language, and ensuring that children are exposed to the cultures of both sides of their family (Muhaimin, 2020).

The Implications of Conflict Resolution for Interethnic Family Harmony.

Effective conflict resolution within Madurese-Javanese interethnic families not only affects the relationship between partners but also has broader implications for various aspects of family life, ranging from

children's identity development and the quality of relationships with extended family to contributions to broader social harmony.

1. Implications for the Quality of Marital Relationships.

Interethnic couples who successfully resolve cultural conflicts constructively tend to have stronger and more enduring marriages. The ability to negotiate and compromise in the face of cultural differences fosters mutual respect and trust, which are the foundations of a healthy marriage (Muhibbin, 2022). Research conducted by Nasution (2022) on interethnic couples in Indonesia shows that couples who actively manage their cultural differences have significantly higher marital satisfaction scores compared to couples who allow cultural conflicts to remain unresolved.

Furthermore, the process of resolving cultural conflicts in marriage can strengthen the emotional bond between partners. As couples navigate the challenges of cultural differences together, they build unique shared experiences that reinforce their identity as a couple (Lestari, 2020). This process also enhances each partner's capacity for empathy, as they learn to understand perspectives that are very different from their own.

2. Implications for Children's Development and Identity.

Children who grow up in harmonious Madurese-Javanese interethnic families benefit uniquely from exposure to two cultural systems at once. Research shows that children in harmonious multicultural families tend to have higher emotional intelligence, better empathy, and greater cognitive flexibility in understanding different perspectives (Nasution, 2022).

However, it is important to note that when cultural conflicts within a family are not properly resolved, children can be the most affected. Children from families experiencing ongoing cultural conflicts often face identity confusion, as they do not know which culture is the "right" one to follow (Heriyanto, 2021). Therefore, constructive conflict resolution is not only important for couples but also serves as a form of protection for children's psychological development.

Effective conflict resolution within interethnic families allows parents to model constructive conflict-resolution skills to their children. Children who witness their parents successfully navigating cultural differences with mutual respect and effective communication will learn these same skills and apply them to their own future relationships (Lestari, 2020).

3. Implications for Relationships with Extended Family.

In the context of Indonesian culture, relationships with the extended family are an important aspect of family life. Conflicts between Madurese and Javanese cultural values involve not only the nuclear couple but often the entire extended family network on both sides (Rosyidi, 2020). Effective conflict resolution at the level of the nuclear couple can have a positive impact on relationships with the extended family, as it reduces the tension that may be felt by in-laws, siblings-in-law, and other extended family members.

Conversely, when conflicts within the nuclear family are not properly resolved, the impact often spreads throughout the entire extended family network. Interethnic conflict within a family can crystallize into increasingly entrenched stereotypes and prejudices toward the partner's ethnic group, which ultimately complicates the reconciliation process (Rudyansjah, 2022). Successful conflict resolution, on the other hand, can pave the way for warmer relationships between two extended families from different cultural backgrounds.

4. Implications for Cultural Adaptation and Acculturation.

Interethnic families that successfully resolve their cultural conflicts not only maintain both cultures in parallel but often produce a unique form of acculturation, in which the best elements of both cultures blend into new cultural practices (Muhaimin, 2020). This process of acculturation at the family level serves as a microcosm of the larger process occurring within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

According to Berry (as cited in Rudyansjah, 2022), there are four possible acculturation strategies that individuals may adopt in cross-cultural situations: integration (maintaining one's original cultural identity while adopting elements of the new culture), assimilation (abandoning one's original cultural identity and fully adopting the new culture), separation (maintaining one's original cultural identity and rejecting the new culture), and marginalization (neither maintaining one's original cultural identity nor adopting the new culture). In the context of Madurese-Javanese families, the integration strategy has been shown to result in the most positive psychological adjustment and the lowest level of conflict.

5. Implications for Social Cohesion and Broader Interethnic Harmony.

The implications of conflict resolution within Madurese-Javanese interethnic families extend beyond the family sphere and contribute to broader social cohesion. The family is the smallest unit of society, and the way families manage cultural differences influences how the broader society perceives and manages ethnic diversity (Banks, 2020).

Harmonious interethnic families can serve as "cultural bridges" that strengthen relationships between the broader Madurese and Javanese communities (Liliweri, 2022). Children from such families often grow up to be individuals with social networks that transcend ethnic boundaries, which in turn helps reduce interethnic prejudice and strengthen social cohesion in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the successful resolution of conflicts within interethnic families can serve as a learning model for the broader community regarding productive ways to manage cultural diversity. These families' real-life experiences in negotiating and compromising across cultural boundaries offer practical lessons that are far more powerful than a mere theoretical understanding of tolerance and diversity (Masykuri, 2021).

6. Implications for Cultural Reproduction and Transmission.

Successful resolution of cultural conflicts in interethnic families also has important implications for how culture is reproduced and transmitted to the next generation. When both cultures are treated equally and respected within the family environment, the children of such families become agents of cultural transmission for both of their parent ethnic groups (Koentjaraningrat, 2020).

Conversely, when cultural conflicts remain unresolved and one culture “wins” the cultural battle within the family, the “losing” culture risks erosion and the loss of generational renewal. In a broader context, the resolution of cultural conflicts that values both traditions contributes to the preservation of Indonesia’s cultural diversity, which is an invaluable national asset (Rosyidi, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that conflicts within interethnic Madurese-Javanese families stem from fundamental differences in communication patterns, concepts of self-esteem, kinship structures, religious practices, and economic orientations. These conflicts are not insurmountable; rather, they are challenges that can be managed through appropriate strategies.

Effective conflict resolution strategies include cultural negotiation, communicative accommodation, mediation by respected figures, the development of hybrid identities, culture-based counseling, compromise, and multicultural education. The successful implementation of these strategies not only fosters harmony within the nuclear family but also has far-reaching positive implications: strengthening the quality of marriage, supporting children’s optimal development, deepening ties with the extended family, promoting healthy acculturation, and contributing to social cohesion as well as the preservation of Indonesia’s cultural diversity.

This literature review confirms that interethnic families, when they successfully manage their cultural differences, not only find happiness within their own households but also make a tangible contribution to Indonesia’s vision as a diverse yet united nation.

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