

Interethnic Marriage Between Makassarese and Javanese in Makassar City

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Abstract: This study examines the forms of cultural adaptation and social impacts in cross-ethnic marriages between Makassarese and Javanese in Makassar City, a multicultural city inhabited by various ethnicities, including Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, Toraja, and Java. Using a descriptive qualitative method and involving eight couples as informants, this study explores four main forms of adaptation by cross-ethnic couples, namely effective communication, incorporation of cultural traditions, adjustment of values and daily habits, and parenting with a multicultural approach. These four forms of adaptation help couples build harmony, strengthen intercultural understanding, and form an inclusive family identity. In addition, this study found four social impacts of cross-ethnic marriage, namely the enrichment of cultural identity, increased tolerance, expansion of social networks, and multicultural education for children. These impacts make inter-ethnic couples agents of change who contribute to social cohesion and integration in Makassar City. This study recommends open communication and continued appreciation of each other's cultures in inter-ethnic marriages, as well as greater community support to appreciate cultural diversity. Further research is expected to explore the long-term impact of inter-ethnic marriages on multicultural identity and attitudes across generations, taking into account economic and educational aspects of cultural adaptation.


1 INTRODUCTION


As one of the largest urban centres in eastern Indonesia, Makassar reflects a rich cultural diversity. With an indigenous population consisting of significant tribes such as Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, and Toraja, the city is also inhabited by migrants from various parts of Indonesia, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Minang, and Minahasa. The combination of natives and migrants creates a unique social dynamic, shaping Makassar into a “miniature Indonesia” where various customs, traditions, and cultural values meet, interact, and form complex patterns of relationships. Amid this diversity, the phenomenon of cross-ethnic marriages, especially between Makassarese as the indigenous population and Javanese as one of the largest immigrant groups, is interesting to study.


Cross-ethnic marriage in Makassar is a personal bond between two individuals and a symbol of

cultural integration efforts that require adaptation, compromise, and adjustment between diverse values and traditions (Masdar et al., 2024). In these marriages, couples from the Makassarese and Javanese ethnic groups often have to deal with different perspectives, customs, and expectations from family and society. This creates the need to build effective communication and the ability to manage differences well in order to maintain a harmonious relationship. As part of a social phenomenon, inter-ethnic marriages reflect the broader process of cultural interaction within the multicultural society of Makassar.

Research on inter-ethnic marriage has shown that this phenomenon while challenging, has the potential to enrich understanding and foster inter-ethnic integration. In Jalaluddin & Putra (2024) study on intercultural communication in Makassar, it was found that good communication between cross-cultural couples plays an important role in building

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harmonious relationships, reducing ethnic tensions and strengthening social integration. Furthermore, Arifin & Darmayanti (2024) in his research highlighted the importance of tolerance and openness in Makassar's multicultural society, which allows for harmony and understanding between ethnic groups. The results of this study show that the success of inter-ethnic marriages is strongly influenced by the couple's ability to appreciate differences and build open communication.

On the other hand, although cross-ethnic marriages are increasingly common in Makassar, couples with different cultural backgrounds are often faced with a number of challenges in daily life. Differences in values, norms and expectations from their respective families can be a source of conflict for cross-ethnic couples (Breger & Hill, 2021; Haidar et al., 2023; Morgan, 2015; Widiyanarti et al., 2024). Fetty (2021) in her study of inter-ethnic marriages in Bukittinggi found that cultural differences between the families of both parties are often an obstacle that is difficult to overcome, especially if couples do not have good adaptation strategies. This finding is in line with Caballero et al., (2008) research, which shows that inter-ethnic couples in urban environments who have higher education tend to be better able to manage cultural differences and build harmonious relationships. They emphasized that education and urbanization factors play a role in improving cross-cultural adaptability.

In Makassar, cross-ethnic couples between Makassarese and Javanese face various differences, ranging from customs, language, to views on the role of family in marital life. Andriawati (2016) research on the communication networks of Javanese migrants in Makassar found that strong relationships between the migrant community and the local community help reduce cultural tensions, create better adaptation, and build stronger social relationships. In addition, this study showed that good communication between spouses allows for higher tolerance of cultural differences. Pasaribu & Lase (2023) in their research on Nias-Batak Toba marriages, also confirmed that successful adaptation in cross-ethnic marriages requires an openness to understanding each other's culture.

Furthermore, cultural differences regarding food customs also present challenges. For example, while the Makassarese community is known for its rich variety of spicy foods, the Javanese diet tends to be milder in flavour. This difference can affect family meal planning, as both partners might have to compromise on food preparation to meet the dietary preferences of both cultures. In some cases, the

couple may adopt a fusion approach, combining traditional Makassarese and Javanese dishes, or they may choose to alternate meals to respect both culinary traditions.

These challenges highlight the need for effective communication, mutual respect, and developing strategies for adapting and compromising. Cross-ethnic couples in Makassar must navigate these cultural differences daily, learning to blend their traditions while respecting each other's cultural backgrounds. As part of the cultural integration process, these couples demonstrate the complex yet rewarding process of cultural negotiation and the importance of effective communication in overcoming the challenges posed by such diversity.

Through this research, we want to explore how cross-ethnic couples from Makassarese and Javanese tribes in Makassar City deal with cultural differences and manage their relationship dynamics. This research focuses on identifying patterns of adaptation and compromise applied by couples in overcoming the challenges of different cultures, values, and customs. In addition, this study will explore how effective communication and mutual respect play an important role in maintaining harmony in cross-cultural relationships. With this approach, this research can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of cross-ethnic marriages in Makassar City and enrich the study of cultural interaction in a multicultural society.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to academic studies and guide cross-cultural couples in overcoming cultural and social challenges in a multicultural environment. In the long run, this research is expected to provide a new understanding for the community about the importance of openness, communication, and mutual respect in maintaining harmony amid cultural diversity.

2 METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the patterns of cultural adaptation and communication in cross-ethnic marriages between Makassarese and Javanese in Makassar City. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and social dynamics of cross-ethnic couples and how they adapt their cultures and habits in everyday life. This approach enables the exploration of more complex social interactions and provides a richer understanding of cultural adaptation in the context of inter-ethnic marriages. Makassar

City was selected as the research location because it has dynamic ethnic diversity, making it an ideal setting to observe cultural interaction and adaptation firsthand.

This study involved eight cross-ethnic couples selected through purposive sampling. The informants consisted of:

- a. Wiratni Wagimen, a woman from Djatinanggor Muslim, married a Makassarese man.
- b. Tiyono Soohar, a Purwokerto man, Christian, married to a Makassarese woman.
- c. Wagiyem, a Lumajang woman, Muslim, married to a Makassarese man.
- d. Suparti, a Yogyakarta woman, Muslim, married to a Makassarese man.
- e. Sugiarto, a Semarang man, Christian, married to a Makassarese woman.
- f. Sri Mulyani, a Surakarta woman, Muslim, married to a Makassarese man.
- g. Karyono, a Banyuwangi man, Hindu, married to a Makassarese woman.
- h. Lestari, a Kudus woman, Muslim, married to a Makassarese man.

These couples were selected because they have been in cross-cultural marriages for an extended period (at least eight years) and have children, making them well-suited to provide insights into stable cultural adaptation processes.

Data was collected using three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted in the field to observe the interactions between these cross-ethnic couples directly. The researcher attended several activities involving these couples, such as family events, cultural celebrations, and other social interactions. This observation aimed to understand how cultural adaptation occurs in practice and how cross-cultural communication occurs in their social contexts.

Interviews were conducted using structured, semi-structured, and unstructured methods. Structured interviews were used to gather organized data, while semi-structured and unstructured interviews allowed more flexibility to delve deeper into the informants' experiences. Each couple was interviewed individually and together, depending on their comfort and the information sought. Informants were asked to share their experiences adapting to their partner's culture, their challenges, and the strategies they used to build harmony in their family. Throughout the interviews, the researcher recorded any changes in responses that indicated the cultural adaptation process or tensions between cultures.

Documentation was also used as a data collection technique to enrich the information obtained through observation and interviews. This included collecting photos of family events, records of cultural celebrations, and even personal documents that showed how couples practised their cultural adaptations. The documentation also helped the researcher understand each partner's cultural and traditional backgrounds in the context of their inter-ethnic marriage.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study employed triangulation techniques. Triangulation was done by verifying information from various sources, such as interviews with the couples, their families, and the surrounding community. In addition, interviews were conducted at different times to check for consistency in informants' responses. This approach ensured the reliability of the data and provided a more comprehensive picture of the couples' cultural adaptation experiences.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, relevant information was filtered and summarized, focusing on aspects related to cultural adaptation, communication, and the challenges faced by the couples. The reduced data was then organized systematically to make it easier to understand. In the data presentation stage, the data was presented in an organized manner, either in narrative form or through themes that emerged from the interviews and observations. The final stage involved concluding to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of inter-ethnic marriages in Makassar, as well as the communication and cultural adaptation patterns employed by these couples.

This study uses a limited sample, involving only eight cross-ethnic couples in Makassar. Therefore, the findings may only fully represent some of the inter-ethnic couples population. Further research with a larger sample could help generalize these findings.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi Province, is located on the southwest coast of Sulawesi Island and serves as a vibrant hub for trade, culture, and education in Eastern Indonesia. Strategically positioned as the gateway to the eastern part of the country, Makassar has witnessed rapid economic development, particularly in trade, industry, and tourism. The city is home to a rich cultural diversity, including ethnic groups such as the Bugis,

Makassarese, Toraja, Mandarese, and Javanese, making it a unique melting pot of cultural encounters.

Given its dynamic cultural landscape, Makassar provides an ideal setting for this research, which explores the dynamics of cultural adaptation in inter-ethnic marriages. The study aims to examine the various forms of adaptation employed by inter-ethnic couples to foster harmony within their relationships and the broader social impact these marriages have on their interactions with extended families and the surrounding community. By focusing on these aspects, the study provides valuable insights into how inter-ethnic couples navigate cultural differences and the implications of these adaptations for their social lives in Makassar.

3.1 Forms of Couple Adaptation in Inter-Ethnic Marriage in Makassar City

This research found several forms of adaptation carried out by inter-ethnic couples to create harmony in domestic life. These forms of adaptation include effective communication, incorporation of traditions, adjustment of daily values and habits, and parenting with a multicultural approach.

3.1.1 Effective Communication and Language Use

Language and cultural differences among inter-ethnic couples are often the first challenges they face. To overcome these differences, the use of effective communication becomes an important element in strengthening their relationship. Many couples try to learn and introduce each other's tribal languages to create a deeper understanding and strengthen emotional bonds.

For example, Suparti stated, "At first I found it difficult to understand some of the terms in Makassar that my husband often uses, so we often teach each other basic terms. This made our communication smoother, and now I often use Makassar words at home." Ismail Bintang says, "I try to learn some Javanese words from my wife, especially terms that are often used in her family. That way, I can join the conversation when I visit, and they are more open to accepting me."

This finding supports Kim & Gudykunst, (2005) theory of cross-cultural communication, which highlights the importance of cross-cultural communication in multicultural families to reduce miscommunication and strengthen relationships. In addition, this finding is in line with George Herbert

Mead's Symbolic Interaction theory, which emphasizes that identity is formed through interaction and the use of symbols, including language.

3.1.2 Incorporation of Customary Traditions and Ceremonies

Integrating traditions and cultural ceremonies from both sides often presents a challenge in inter-ethnic marriages. However, it also serves as a key form of adaptation to create harmony within the family (Asai & Olsno, 2004; Lindenberg, 2009). This is reflected in the experiences of inter-ethnic couples like Wagiyem and Tiyono, who come from different cultural backgrounds: Wagiyem is from Makassar, and Tiyono is from Java. When planning their wedding, they merged their respective cultural traditions to honour and respect each other's heritage.

Wagiyem shared, "In our wedding, the akad (marriage contract) ceremony was carried out following Javanese customs, while the reception followed Makassarese traditions. Both of our extended families were happy that their traditions were respected and included in our big event." She explained that despite coming from two very different cultures, the fusion of their traditions brought joy to both families. Tiyono also added, "We felt that by combining both traditions, we were able to maintain a balance and show mutual respect. My family felt appreciated by the inclusion of Makassarese customs in the reception."

Moreover, traditions were integrated into other celebrations, such as their child's birth and Thanksgiving events. Sri Mulyani, another informant who also experienced an inter-ethnic marriage, shared a similar experience. "We celebrated the birth of our child following Javanese traditions, but also added some Makassarese rituals. This was a form of appreciation for my husband's culture, which upholds traditional values," she said. Sri emphasized that despite differences in how they celebrated, they managed to create an event that both families could accept. "We feel that this combination not only strengthens our bond with the families but also makes us appreciate both cultures," she added.

The merging of traditions in these couples' lives supports (Merton, 2020). The theory of structural adaptation explains that adaptation involves negotiating and modifying cultural values to balance two groups. Through this integration, couples like Wagiyem and Tiyono, as well as Sri Mulyani and her husband, create harmony in their immediate family and strengthen their relationships with extended family members. This demonstrates that cultural

diversity in domestic life can serve as a valuable source of enrichment.

Sri Mulyani's story also illustrates how the challenges of an inter-ethnic marriage can be overcome through understanding and compromise. Despite differences in traditions, this couple found ways to celebrate significant life events in a manner that respected both cultures. Their cultural adaptation highlights the importance of cooperation and mutual respect in fostering a harmonious relationship in an inter-ethnic family.

3.1.3 Adjustment of Daily Values and Habits

Inter-ethnic couples often face differences in daily habits and values, which require conscious efforts to reconcile their diverse cultural practices. These adjustments range from communication patterns and daily routines to how partners perceive their roles in the household. Finding common ground that respects both cultures is essential in creating harmonious relationships.

For example, Lestari, a woman from Kudus, shared, "In my Javanese family, speaking in a low tone is normal, while my husband's family from Makassar is more open and expressive. It was different at first, but now we adjust our communication style to avoid misunderstandings." Similarly, Suparti, from Yogyakarta, mentioned, "I am used to waking up early and doing household routines according to Javanese tradition, but my husband from Makassar has a different pattern. We finally made a schedule that we can follow together without sacrificing each other's habits."

A significant adjustment for many cross-ethnic couples also revolves around food, an essential part of cultural expression. For example, Lestari and her husband often faced challenges due to their differing tastes in food. "In my Javanese family, we prefer sweet dishes, but my husband from Makassar loves spicy food," Lestari explained. "At first, it was difficult because I wasn't used to the heat of Makassarese food, and he found my dishes too sweet. But over time, we started taking turns cooking meals from each other's culture. Now, we've found a balance by combining sweet and spicy elements, like adding a little sweetness to the spicy dishes from Makassar or making sambal with a milder taste for me."

Such efforts demonstrate how food traditions can be blended to respect both cultures, enriching the couple's relationship by fostering mutual understanding and compromise.

In addition to daily routines and food preferences, inter-ethnic couples often face external pressures from their extended families and society, particularly when it comes to the acceptance of their marriage. This pressure can include scepticism about the longevity and success of cross-ethnic marriages, especially regarding cultural differences. For instance, Suparti, from Yogyakarta, recalled their early challenges with her husband's family. "When we first got married, my husband's family was hesitant about how we would manage the differences between our cultures," she shared. "There were concerns about how we would raise our children and whether our cultural differences would affect our relationship."

Suparti continued, "We communicated openly with both families, explaining how we respected each other's culture and traditions. Over time, our families began to understand that these differences didn't create barriers but rather enriched our lives together. Now, both families support us, and our children are taught to value and respect both Javanese and Makassarese cultures."

This is consistent with Merton's structural adaptation theory, which suggests that adaptation involves negotiating and modifying cultural values to create a balanced and inclusive family structure. Shearman & Dumlao (2008) emphasize that compromise, understanding, and open communication in cross-cultural families are crucial for maintaining domestic harmony and overcoming social pressures. Through their openness and flexibility, these couples demonstrate how adjustments in daily habits, such as food preferences, family traditions, and managing external pressures, contribute to the sustainability and success of inter-ethnic marriages.

3.1.4 Parenting with a Multicultural Approach

Multicultural education is an important aspect in the lives of inter-ethnic couples, especially in raising children. Couples tend to teach children to appreciate both cultures from an early age so that they grow up with a strong multicultural identity.

As expressed by Wiratni Wagimen, "We teach our children Javanese and Makassarese at the same time. So, at home they are used to hearing two different languages." Wagiyem also shares, "My husband and I have a habit of telling stories from our respective cultures before bedtime. The children get to know folktales from Java and Makassar, and it makes them more interested in our origins."

This multicultural approach is in line with Mead's Symbolic Interaction theory, where cultural symbols from both tribes become a means for children to build their multicultural identity (Mead et al., 2000; Olneck, 1990). Berry (2016) also highlights that early exposure to diverse cultures can strengthen openness and tolerance in children.

3.2 The Impact of Intertribal Marriage on the Social Life of Couples

Inter-ethnic marriages have significant positive impacts on the couples' social lives. Some of the main impacts include enrichment of cultural identity, increased tolerance, expansion of social networks, and challenges and acceptance from extended family.

3.2.1 Cultural Identity Enrichment and Tolerance

Inter-ethnic marriages play an important role in enriching the cultural identity of the couple and increasing their tolerance. The presence of two cultures in daily life provides opportunities for couples and children to recognize and appreciate differences, thus strengthening the family's multicultural identity.

As stated by Wiratni Wagimen, "This marriage has made me more familiar with my husband's traditions, and we try to adapt each other's customs in our daily lives. Although different, we feel we complement each other." Tiyono Soohar also adds, "I come from Java and am a Christian, while my wife is from Makassar and is Muslim. We try to teach our children that different cultures and beliefs can still coexist peacefully."

Mead's Symbolic Interaction Theory supports these findings, where family identity is formed through cultural symbols integrated in daily interactions. The enrichment of cultural identity also strengthens mutual respect and tolerance within the family, where couples learn to accept and celebrate differences as part of their identity. Breger & Hill (2021) research also shows that cross-cultural marriages increase flexibility and inclusive attitudes towards differences, so that couples become more tolerant of cultural differences in the wider community.

3.2.2 Expansion of Social Networks

Cross-ethnic marriages expand couples' social networks by allowing them to connect with two different cultural communities. This wider social

network provides benefits in terms of social support and economic access, which can strengthen the social and financial stability of the family.

As Suparti stated, "By marrying across ethnic lines, I can get to know more people from my husband's community. This expands our social circle, which was previously limited to my family." Sugiarto also adds, "One of the benefits of marrying across ethnic lines is the much greater social connections. We are often invited to events from both communities which provides a lot of social support for our family."

Kim & Gudykunst (2005) research supports these findings, suggesting that extensive social networks provide greater access to economic and social opportunities for cross-cultural couples. Through this connectedness, couples can benefit from two different cultural communities, which strengthens their social position in society.

3.2.3 Challenges and Acceptance from Extended Family

The challenge of gaining acceptance from extended family is part of the adaptation of cross-ethnic couples. Some extended families may have difficulty in accepting differences in customs and values, which requires the couple to introduce their culture in a positive way.

As expressed by Wiratni Wagimen, "At first my family was quite surprised by the differences in customs and habits from my husband who is from Makassar, but over time they began to accept after seeing our good intentions." Tiyono Soohar adds, "My extended family in Purwokerto was hesitant to accept these cultural differences, but by getting to know each other, they eventually felt close to the customs of my wife from Makassar."

This level of acceptance takes time and effort, which supports Merton's structural adaptation theory, where acceptance of a new norm requires adaptation. This challenge encourages couples to act as a bridge between the two extended families, creating a more harmonious relationship.

3.2.4 Multicultural Education for Children

Multicultural education in inter-ethnic families plays an important role in shaping tolerance in children. Children who grow up with education from both cultures have a broader understanding of diversity, which makes them more inclusive in social interactions.

As expressed by Sri Mulyani, "Every time there is a traditional celebration from the Makassar family, my children get involved. The same goes for Javanese

traditions.” Lestari adds, “Our children are taught the importance of respecting different cultures. We want them to understand that having two cultural heritages is richness.”

These findings support Berry (2016) research and Mead's theory, which suggests that interaction with cultural symbols strengthens children's multicultural identity. By teaching children to respect and love two cultures, inter-ethnic couples contribute to creating a generation that is more tolerant and open to differences.

Overall, this study found that cross-ethnic marriages between Javanese and Makassarese make a positive contribution to the formation of an inclusive cultural identity, increased tolerance, expansion of social networks, and multicultural education for children. Adaptation through effective communication, incorporation of traditions, adjustment of daily habits, and multicultural education provide a strong foundation for cross-ethnic couples to create a harmonious family rich in diversity. Mead and Merton's theory serves as a conceptual foundation that helps to understand this dynamic, showing that cultural adaptation is not just an adjustment, but a process that enriches the lives of inter-ethnic couples in Makassar City.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, inter-ethnic marriages between Makassarese and Javanese in Makassar City demonstrate various forms of adaptations couples make to create family harmony. These adaptations include effective communication, incorporating traditions, values adjustment, and multicultural childcare approaches. These practices strengthen family relationships and foster mutual respect for cultural diversity, positively impacting the couples' social lives by enriching cultural identity, expanding social networks, and increasing tolerance. By engaging with two cultural communities, inter-ethnic couples gain broader social support and economic opportunities while serving as agents of social change, promoting integration and cohesion within society.

However, this study has limitations. The research involved only eight inter-ethnic couples in Makassar, which may only partially represent the broader population of inter-ethnic couples. Future studies with more extensive and more diverse samples could help generalize these findings. Additionally, future research could focus on the long-term impact of inter-ethnic marriages on the cultural identity of children in

cross-ethnic families. Developing a framework that includes the influence of differing traditions on child-rearing practices and family adaptation in broader socioeconomic contexts could provide deeper insights. By exploring these aspects, future studies are expected to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of inter-ethnic marriages and their implications for individuals, families, and multicultural societies.

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