

## Intercultural Communication for Family Ministry

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### Article History

Received: 1 Jan 2023

Revised: 15 Jan 2023

Accepted: 21 Jan 2023

Published: 1 May 2023

**Keywords:** family;  
pastoral work;  
transformative  
community

**Abstract:** The focus of this research is to understand the intercultural communication of Javanese-Dayak Catholic families in the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, Diocese of Palangkaraya. The world is growing globalized and there are diverse tribes and religions due to technological developments and population displacement. In such circumstances there is no longer a boundary between one another and meetings between people of different cultures and religions are inevitable. One can no longer be in an enclosed space as in a capsule, therefore, willingly or unwillingly, one must accept the differences that exist in a heterogeneous society. This phenomenon occurred in the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish of Palangkaraya. Where in this Parish there are quite a lot of intercultural families (different tribes and cultures). In intercultural family life there are many interesting things to discuss. But the author just wants to know the situation and the challenges. Method used was qualitative studies. This qualitative research aims to explain the phenomenon as deeply as possible. The study found that intercultural communication in Catholic families in the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish had a positive impact in maintaining family harmony.

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## INTRODUCTION

Culture is always inherent in a person and becomes part of society. Culture not only talks about ethnicity, religion, race, but also about the values, character, customs and beliefs that a person has. Culture itself is dynamic where the culture that an individual has can undergo shifts or changes. For example, someone who enters a new environment, does not rule out the possibility that the person will experience and follow the new culture formed from the environment. Every individual must have a culture that can influence how to interact with others. According to Triandis (Samovar et al., 2013: 36), culture is objective and subjective components made by humans in the past to survive and are shared or passed on among group members because they have similar languages and live in the same time and place. Talk about culture, not only about things that are visible from the outside, such as skin color, ethnicity, gender, and others but also about what is invisible, such as habits or values held by a person. This is what culture can say is complex.

The first definition put forward in the book *"Intercultural Communication: A Reader"* states that *intercultural communication* occurs when a message that must be understood is produced by members of one culture for consumption by members of another culture. Another definition is that the process of intercultural communication is interpersonal interaction and

interpersonal communication carried out by several people who have different cultural backgrounds.

Different cultures have different value systems and can therefore be one of the determinants of different life goals. The way each person communicates depends largely on their culture; language, rules and norms of each. Culture has responsibility for the entire repertoire of communicative behavior and the meaning that each person has. Consequently, the treasures owned by two people of different cultures will be different, this can cause various kinds of difficulties.

The communication difficulties faced by the individuals involved are caused by differences in their cultural expectations. Differences in cultural expectations can pose fatal risks. Differences in expectations in communication at least cause communication to be not smooth, feelings of discomfort or misunderstanding arise. Misunderstandings will often occur when a person often interacts with people from different cultural groups. The main problem is that every individual has a tendency to perceive his culture as an undisputed necessity. And so everyone will use their culture as a standard to measure other cultures. One tangible form of intercultural communication activity can be seen in the life of intermarried families.

In the life of intermarried families there will be a misunderstanding of intercultural communication, involving all family members; husband, wife, children, and even other family members who live in one house. This situation can result in an agreement to recognize one culture that will dominate or the development of another culture that is a fusion of the two cultures (third culture), or even the two cultures can go hand in hand in one family.

Furthermore, in the research *Respecting Cultural Differences*, reviewed intercultural communication that occurred in Sudiroprajan Village, Surakarta, involving Javanese and Chinese ethnicities. The results of Turnomo Rahardjo's research show a high motivation factor, this is inseparable from the setting or residential environment of Sudiroprajan residents who are relatively mixed between Chinese and Javanese ethnicities. Such characteristics of settlements do not leave enough space for individuals from the two ethnic groups to avoid interaction.

The focus of this research is to understand the intercultural communication of Catholic families in the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish Palangkaraya. The world is increasingly globalized and there are various tribes and religions due to technological developments and population movements. In such conditions there are no longer boundaries between each other and encounters between people of different cultures and religions are inevitable. People can no longer exist in an enclosed space like a capsule, therefore, willingly or unwillingly, one must accept the differences that exist in a heterogeneous society. This phenomenon occurred in the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish Palangka Raya. Where in this parish there are quite a lot of intercultural families (different tribes and cultures). Of course in the life of different ethnic families there are many interesting things to discuss.

Based on the explanation above, the main problem of this study can be formulated in 3 main formulations. How families live their "marriage vows" amid cultural differences. What

kind of difficulties do you face in creating a harmonious family in the midst of cultural differences? As well as what aspects of culture challenge faith. What kind of efforts have been made to achieve a harmonious family in the midst of cultural differences.

The Church is enlightened by faith, which gives her an understanding of all truths about the high value of marriage and family, and of their deepest meaning. Once again the Church feels the urgency of the need to proclaim the Gospel, the "Good News", to all people without exception, especially to all those who accept the call to family life, and prepare for it, to all husbands and wives and parents in the universe. The Church has a deep conviction that only by accepting the gospel can the expectations naturally placed on marriage and family be fulfilled. The marriage and family life desired by God in His act of creating the world are intrinsically directed to its fulfillment in Christ. Both need His grace, to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginnings," that is to fully understand and realize God's Plan. At a moment in history, when the family became a monthly force so many forces tried to destroy it and in some way ruin its appearance, and the Church realized that the welfare of society and its own interests were intimately tied to the interests of the family, the Church more compelled and urgently understood her mission. to proclaim to all people God's Plan for marriage and family. The Church guarantees the fullness of its vitality as well as its development both humanly and Christianly. That is how the Church contributes her participation to renew society and the People of God. The Church's pastoral concern for Catholic families of different cultures and backgrounds can be seen in Pope John Paul II's magisterium intervention contained in the Exhortation of the Apostolic Letter *Familiaris Consortio*. Nos. 15,19 of this document describes the Family as a communion of persons.

In marriage and family a complex of interpersonal relationships is formed, life as husband and wife, fatherhood and motherhood, relationship with children and fraternity. Through these relationships each member is integrated into the "human family" and the "family of God," the Church. Christian marriage and the family build up the Church: for in the family man not only receives life and gradually through education is ushered in human communion; but through the birth of baptism and the formation of faith children are also invited into the family of God, which is the Church. The human family, torn apart by sin, is restored to unity by the redemptive power of Christ's death and resurrection. By sharing in the saving fruits of that event, Christian marriage is a natural environment for man to enter the extended family of the Church. The command to multiply and multiply, which in the beginning was given to both male and female, thus reached its whole truth and its full realization. That is how the Church finds in the family, which grows out of the Sacrament, its birthplace and ward to enter the generations of men, and generation after generation can enter the Church.

The family based on love and brought alive by it is a communion of persons: husband and wife, parents and children, relatives. His first task is to faithfully live the reality of communion, accompanied by a continuous effort to develop authentic harmony between individuals. The deepest principle of the task, its constant strength, and its ultimate goal is love. Without love the family is not a pillar of life between persons, and likewise, without love the

family cannot live, develop or perfect itself as a communion of persons. What we wrote in the encyclical "Redemptor Hominis" applies first and foremost to the family: "Man cannot live without love. He is still a being incomprehensible to him, his life is meaningless, if love is not expressed towards him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it, and impose it on himself, if he does not intimately participate in it". Love between husband and wife, and described from there, more broadly, love between members of a family between parents and children, between siblings, relatives and members of the household, is enlivened and sustained by an unrelenting internal dynamism, and leads the family to ever deeper and intensified communion, and it underlies and animates the pillars of marriage and family life.

The first communion is: that which is established and develops between husband and wife: according to the marriage covenant of man and woman "no longer two, but one flesh". They are called to keep growing in their fellowship through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage vows in order to give up one another's whole self. The conjugal communion is rooted in the natural complementarity that exists between man and woman, and is further strengthened by the personal willingness of the husband and wife to jointly carry out their whole plan of life, sharing what they have and all their reality. That is why communion is the fruit and sign of a profound human need. But in Christ the Lord God accommodates man's needs, edifies them, clarifies and lifts them up, and leads them to perfection through the sacrament of Marriage. The Holy Spirit, poured out in sacramental celebrations, gives Christian couples the gift of a new communion of love, and it is a living and tangible image of the special unity, which makes the Church the undivided Mystical Body of the Lord Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit becomes a lifelong commandment for Christian husbands and wives, as well as a compelling force, so that every day they progress toward an ever-richer union among themselves at all levels of body, temperament, heart, mind and will, and soul, Such is how that unity manifests to the Church and the world the new communion of love bestowed by the grace of Christ. The alliance was radically opposed by polygamy. Indeed, polygamy directly denies God's Plan, revealed from the very beginning; for contrary to the equality of personal dignity of men and women; Because in marriage they surrender themselves in total love, therefore also unique and exclusive.

## **METHOD**

To achieve the research objectives set above, this study will use a qualitative interview approach to obtain descriptive data from respondents regarding family life of different tribes and cultures, namely Javanese-Dayak origin. The expected information is a description of the opinions or responses of respondents about intercultural. Its implementation in the midst of society and its consequences for the realization of church life. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena very deeply through collecting data as deeply as possible. Population size and sampling are not prioritized, but in-depth data can explain the phenomenon being studied. Depth (quality) is important over the quantity of data. The relationship between theories, concepts, and data is that data raises or forms new theories. Case studies are used because they

describe and intensively analyze a single unit or system that is limited in space and time to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning to everyone involved.

Prospective informants (married couples) began in October 2020. For prospective informants who are worthy according to researchers, an approach is taken by openly expressing the aims and objectives of researchers in more detail about research with topics regarding the quality of communication in maintaining harmony. Research activities in the form of observations and interviews through in-depth voice recordings (cellphones) have been carried out effectively since October 2020.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, it can be seen that the dominance of challenges faced in mixed marriage families between Javanese-Dayak origin, Palangka Raya Central Kalimantan. In the discussion of the results of this study, researchers will divide it into two parts, namely communication and marriage.

*Communication.* Human life in the world cannot be separated from communication activities, because communication is the most important part of the system and order of human social life. Many experts consider that communication is a very fundamental need for someone in social life. Communicating is primarily to express and support self-identity to establish social contact with people around us and to influence others to feel, think, or behave as we wish. So communication is clearly inseparable from human life, both as individuals and as members of society. Another definition is a process through which a person (communicator) conveys a stimulus (usually in the form of words) with the aim of changing or shaping the behavior of others (communicant), with that change will be obtained the equality of perception and purpose. Communication in this case is the process of conveying thoughts or feelings by one person to another person using symbols that mean the same to both parties.

From the results of these interviews and observations that the six (6) couples said that the most important challenge in their family is the problem of communication (Javanese-Dayak). The results of this study show that before and after marriage there is a perception of each couple with differences in cultural ethnicity. At the time before marriage, the problems that arise are not just convincing one's own family to be able to accept a partner. Another issue is whether or not the spouse is accepted into the partner's family and whether the spouse's family is "compatible". That is, many things need to be prepared and discussed before the wedding is carried out. The position of the husband or wife in the partner's family depends on how close to each family and their perception of the tribe they have. Establishing a good relationship with your partner's family is absolutely done. Even if at first they have a perception of prejudice against different tribes, it is possible that the attitude and behavior of the husband or wife can erode the prejudice.

As quoted from the researcher's interview with families of different Dayak-Javanese cultural tribes in Palangka Raya City, especially in the Parish Church of Jesus the Good Shepherd, including the families of Mr. PS and Mrs. WM. According to Mrs. WM, marriages

of different tribes initially take time to be able to civilize with the culture of the couple, besides that there will be some problems both from each family and the couple. From the excerpts from the interview, it can be said that every problem can be resolved by negotiation or deliberation with good communication. This certainly facilitates the process of preparing for a planned wedding. So it is clear that communication with the couple's family (different ethnic groups) is needed to form relationships, because it can change the opinions, and attitudes of each partner's family, so that what is expected can be realized. Based on the answers from Mr. TM's family and Mr. EP's family, we know that perception greatly influences someone who initially does not have a habit so that there is confusion between the couple of different cultural tribes, but even like that this couple does not experience conflict, because this couple can appreciate the culture of their respective partners. Families between Javanese-Dayak tribes and vice versa regardless of the ethnic differences they have, problems that occur due to differences in perception. But if stimuli are perceived and organized selectively, meaning stimuli that are given meaning uniquely by the person receiving them, then the problem of ethnic differences in culture will not be a problem, but will be something unique to the couple.

*Verbal process.* It includes not only how to talk to others, but also internal thinking activities and developing meaning for the words used. These processes are vitally related to the process of giving meaning when conducting intercultural communication. The first obstacle that will be felt in families between Javanese-Dayak tribes or vice versa is the difference in language used in communicating and not infrequently there will be differences in meaning from the communication process. Especially when the verbal process that occurs concerns ethnic differences. Language differences when communicating verbally take time to learn and adapt. Not only the problem of language differences, the influence of the culture of each family of different tribes is very diverse. One of them was felt by Mrs. PG when she first entered the family of her Javanese husband. From the interview, it can be seen that the difference in cultural communication is owned from the family of Mr. MD and Mrs. PG. But these cultural differences can become commonplace later when they happen repeatedly and can adapt to them. As Mr. TM said.

*Non Verbal Process* . This communication process is usually done through gestures, facial expressions, eye views, and others. In communication between Javanese-Dayak cultural tribes and vice versa in the family, several forms of non-verbal communication behavior are body language, facial appearance, eye movements, biological appearance, body language, and linguistic messages. Facial expressions are part of non-verbal communication because in expression we do not need language. Even nonverbal communication from the presence of facial expressions will make communication can run more effectively such as source narration. Time is an important part of shaping non-verbal communication patterns. Because different times will produce different cultures. In addition, a very visible form of non-verbal communication is body language. Body language often comes hand in hand during non-verbal communication. As revealed by Mrs. AT. From the explanation of Mrs. AT, it can be seen that everyone has unique habits and body language that explains how the character of their partner.

In addition, *paralinguistic* messages in intertribal families are a combination of verbal and non-verbal behavior. As confirmed by Mrs. Ev.

Families between Javanese-Dayak origin have very diverse cultural differences. In uniting two cultural characteristics in one family, the part involved in the communication activity brings with it different cultural backgrounds of experiences and reflects the values espoused therefore a communication strategy is needed to unite differences into acceptable ones. According to Alo Liliweri (2003: 9) intercultural communication is adding the word culture to the statement "communication between two / more people with different cultural backgrounds". In families that have differences in Javanese-Dayak tribes and vice versa, they have differences in personality and their perception of interpersonal relationships.

When husband and wife have a conversation, it is called intercultural communication because two parties "accept" the differences between them, so it is useful to eliminate the misunderstanding of the culture of the tribe that the couple has and anxiety in interpersonal relationships. The level of uncertainty and anxiety can be a motivation for accommodating communication strategies. This communication strategy is also produced because of the willingness to learn the "culture" owned by the couple so that later being able to adapt psychologically will be pleasant and acceptable to these different intertribal families. The result is adaptive communication i.e. husband and wife adjust to each other and consequently produce effective intercultural interpersonal communication.

Effective communication requires sensitivity and skills that we can only do after we learn the communication process and an awareness of what we are as communicators and people who receive messages while communicating. Learning effective communication is basically trying to understand what causes others to behave the way they do.

The first communion is: that which is established and develops between husband and wife: according to the marriage covenant of man and woman "no longer two, but one flesh". They are called to keep growing in their fellowship through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage vows in order to give up one another's whole self. The conjugal communion is rooted in the natural complementarity that exists between man and woman, and is further strengthened by the personal willingness of the husband and wife to jointly carry out their whole plan of life, sharing what they have and all their reality. According to Pope John Paul II, husband and wife are called to a full and complete union of life thanks to their marriage in a natural sense and even more, thanks to their marriage being elevated to a sacrament. In that communion of life, husband and wife give of themselves out of love for each other. The main task is to live the reality of togetherness lovingly and with all one's being participate in building personal communities of love (*Familiaris Consortio* 17-18).

From the interviews, researchers found that of the six (6) couples prioritized the integrity of their family and marriage. Although in the course of family there are conflicts they still keep the marriage promises, namely: the unity of the indissoluble communion of husband and wife, the family: the communion of persons and love as the principle and strength of

communion. These three important points are the handle of the 6 families that researchers found. So that the family life of these six family couples remains harmonious until now.

Of the 6 couples the authors interviewed, almost all said that differences and conflicts did not make their families disharmonious. It is precisely in these differences and conflicts that they can learn from each other's cultures. Because for the six (6) families, in addition to cultural differences and conflicts there is a more important value that is fought for, namely the promise of faithful marriage.

## CONCLUSION

In informant couples with different cultural backgrounds (the six couples: Javanese and Dayak culture), there is a conflict at the beginning of the marriage period so that there is dissatisfaction with the couple. The source of conflict tends to be caused by differences in daily habits but is considered by informants as typical behavior of a particular tribe. Cultural differences in marriage are acceptable and not disputed by the spouse.

A marital relationship is not free from conflicts that occur between husband and wife. But how to respond and overcome conflict is very instrumental for the development of further relationships. If couples can face conflicts openly, are willing to correct mistakes and find solutions together, then the conflict will not continue. This study did not focus on the topic of conflict in marriage, but researchers found that conflict can be a positive thing if couples are able to handle it appropriately. There are informants who argue that through conflict, a person gets information about the things that his partner likes and dislikes, then this information can be useful to avoid recurrence of conflict and maintain marital relations.

This study concludes that the understanding of Catholic couples who choose mixed marriage regarding the nature and purpose of Catholic marriage is closely related to the ecclesial, educative and koinonia dimensions. This proves that intermarried couples can play well the meaning of family life as arranged and expected by the Catholic Church. This finding also teaches that the success of couples to interpret family life, is not solely because the couple is of the same faith (both Catholics), but there are other factors that influence commitment, openness, mutual loyalty, all of which are based on total and unshared love from the people couple as husband and wife (exclusive love).

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