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Emerging Cross-Cultural Marriage Between Indonesian Brides and Turkish Grooms

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Abstract

Marriage migration is a phenomenon that has been increasing recently. This includes cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms. This study aims to prove how the marriage migration phenomenon results in increasing cross-cultural marriages. Using quantitative demographic data collected from the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Türkiye, this study explores the patterns of cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms with descriptive methods. In 2022, data shows that out of 87 cross-cultural marriages, 82 Indonesian brides were the leading actors in marriage migration and settled in Türkiye with their husbands. This study aims to give an early understanding of factors that encourage Indonesian brides to marry Turkish grooms and migrate from their host country. This study also examines how the potential cross-cultural couple meets for the first time. Additionally, it examines Indonesian brides educational background and the Turkish language proficiency of brides who decide to migrate, including how these factors might affect their marriage. This study's results provide details about the cross-cultural marriage landscape between Indonesia and Türkiye.

Keywords

Marriage Migration,
Cross-Cultural
Marriage, Indonesia,
Turkey, Social Media

Introduction

It is undeniable that the phenomenon of human mobilization is currently increasing rapidly. People with different backgrounds move from one place to another for a better quality of life. Migration can be seen as a matter of monetary, political, or social deprivation, and can be a brief or long-term response to opportunity or chance. Marriage migration is much more than a social phenomenon. It has become one of Asia's notable migratory patterns and trends (Wilson, 1988, p. 117). Globalization generates and widens the economic gap between developed and developing countries and marriage migration

is an outcome of this. Increasing global economic disparities encourage and exacerbate marriage migration movement, motivation, and direction. In addition, growing global financial distinction encourages and intensifies the motivation of and course for the marriage migration flow. Men from wealthier countries attempt to lure women from poorer countries by making use of their better socio-economic status, whereas women from poorer countries intend to enhance their socio-economic stabilities and seek better lives by marrying men from wealthier countries ([United Nations Population Fund, 2006, p. 25](#)). One of these factors is seen in the movement of marriage migration between Indonesian brides who leave their home countries to marry Turkish men.

The factors that encourage Indonesian women to marry Turkish men and migrate are socio-cultural because Indonesia and Türkiye are considered to Muslim countries. Similar and comparable characteristics can be seen in Turkish men's desire to marry Indonesian women and vice versa. Turkish men believe that they will have a crucial role inside the family circle as husbands and spiritual leaders because they follow the same faith. In return, they expect their spouses to emerge as conventional wives, who manage the home and contend with the children. Many American, Australian, and European husbands report that they entered correspondence marriages because of the perception that Asian women embrace more traditional (feminine and maternal) values than western women ([Cahill, 1990](#); [Constable, 2003a](#)).

We can see that social media plays a vital role in a cross-cultural marriage. Many couples meet on social media and eventually get married. As of January 2022, there were 202.6 million internet users in Indonesia and there were 69.95 million internet users in Türkiye. However, issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact research into internet adoption, so actual internet user figures may be higher than these published numbers suggest. Facebook is one of the well-known social networks that brides and grooms use to find relationships. Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicates that Facebook had 129.9 million users in Indonesia and 34.40 million in Türkiye in early 2022 ([Datareportal, 2022](#)). The other way of meeting is personal references from family and close friends of Turkish men married to Indonesian women.

For a few, migration is a planned and anticipated occasion on the lifestyle path. However, for others, it can be a drastic step into unforeseen adverse conditions. Marriage across national boundaries usually entails changes in, or the prospect of changes in, one spouse's legal status and the physical movement of one spouse across borders ([Watts, 1983](#); [Fan and Huang, 1998](#)). When migrating, these brides need to learn and adapt to new environments, such as culture and language. Indonesian brides must learn Turkish to establish relationships with their grooms' families and for daily communication. Lack of language skills can lead to difficulties adapting, as well as discrimination and exclusion in host countries. The fracture, separation, and loss that is part of every migration impacts the

mental health of all immigrants, but women experience this differently than men. Rogler et al. (1987) state that migration causes deep and lasting stress resulting from difficulties encountered in entering a new economic system, a new culture, and in changing personal ties. Vega et al. (1987) and Rumbaut (1989) add the circumstances of leaving the country of origin and the trauma of the passage itself. This stress is reflected as mental anxiety or depression in immigrants. Between the stress of migration and the suffering experienced by immigrants, life changes, including coping styles and social support networks, shape immigrant adjustment. In a study about Mexican immigrant women, V. Nelly Salgado de Snyder (1987) revealed a fear of acculturative stress that shows that much higher stress levels were experienced by women than by men.

Migration flows out of Indonesia are not a new phenomenon for Indonesians. Currently, Indonesia's foreign minister, Retno LP Marsudi, said the number of citizens abroad is about 2.7 million, or 1.86% of the total population (UGM, 2015). A study in 2016 showed that the estimated size of the Indonesian diaspora ranged from 2.9 million to 8 million, and the increase is trending (Muhidin and Utomo, 2016). Diaspora, in this case can be defined as The First Indonesian Diaspora Congress (CID 1) in the United States in 2012 declared; it consists of Indonesian citizens, citizens of other nations, and of Indonesian descent (Muhidin and Utomo, 2016). Marriage migrants also play a part in becoming the Indonesian diaspora. For example, in Australia, 63,159 people, or 0.3% of the total population of 21 million citizens, are Indonesian Diaspora. Furthermore, according to Graeme Hugo, more Indonesian citizens are migrating and marrying Australian citizens (Wijaya, 2013). According to Lalu Muhammad Iqbal, the current Indonesian Ambassador to Türkiye, there are around 7,000 Indonesian living in Türkiye. The number doubled from three years ago. About 1,500 to 3,000 are students, while the rest are migrant laborers who work as spa therapists, mostly from Bali, and Indonesians who are married to Turkish citizens (Anadolu Agency, 2019 and 2022).

The most recent studies in Türkiye in the field of cross-cultural marriage are mainly focused on the marriage phenomenon between Turkish grooms and Russian brides that mostly take place in Antalya (Deniz and Özgür 2010, 2013). The study suggest Russian women generally meet their husband when they visit Antalya on holiday or when they come for short-term work. Russian women's main motivation is to seek a better life. Most of them are highly educated with professional skills and have a natural flair for learning Turkish (Deniz and Özgür 2010, 2013). Thus, while cross-cultural marriage is a common practice in Indonesia and currently can be found in many countries worldwide, a study or research on cross-cultural marriage according to Romano (2008, p. 10) is still rarely found. Studies about marriage migration between Indonesian women and Turkish men are still inadequate and have received little or no attention.

In this study, we describe the emergence of the marriage migration phenomenon

between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms, starting from how the brides and grooms meet and decide to get married. First, this study describes the supporting factors that encourage Indonesian brides to migrate and settle down with Turkish grooms. We also analyze early signs of possible issues that might cause challenges in cross-cultural marriages. These challenges arise in the form of cultural or language barriers that can cause culture shock and stress to the individuals who migrate for marriage. Based on data obtained from the Indonesian Embassy for Türkiye in Ankara, in 2022, cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian women who married Turkish men had the highest reported percentage (82.65%). With the high percentage of Indonesian women who migrate to marry Turkish men, we observe the outer pattern of the individuals in cross-cultural marriages who decide to migrate and leave their origin country to settle in Türkiye.

Conceptual Approach

There is more than one terminology to define a cross-cultural marriage and according to Falicov (1986), the term culture in marriage is a fluid and wide concept. It could mean differences in religion, ethnic, social status, nationality, or race. In addition to cross-cultural migration, some experts define the phenomenon with terms close to their field of expertise. For example, Romano (2008, p. 1), an expert in communication studies, called the phenomenon inter-cultural marriage. Other terms that can be used are international marriage, inter-ethnic marriage, inter-cultural relationship, or inter-marriage. But for Falicov (1986, p. 429) the term inter-cultural marriage is the same as inter-marriage and cross-cultural marriage, indicating that the three terms carry the same meaning. Gudykunst (1994) defined cross-cultural marriage as the marriage between two individuals with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Stam (2011) describes marriage migration as a form of migration, defining it as migration to join a spouse in another area within a country and international marriages in another country, usually at or soon after marriage.

Supporting the theory that cross-cultural marriage is related to socio-cultural factors, the American Psychological Association explains that a socio-cultural perspective is any viewpoint or approach to health, mental health, history, politics, economics, or any other area of human experience that emphasizes the environmental factors of society, culture, and social interaction. Socio-cultural theory stresses the role that social interaction plays in psychological development. It suggests that human learning is essentially a social process and that our cognitive functions are formed based on our interactions with those around us who are more skilled (American Psychological Association, n.d). Türkiye is known to have a highly visible cultural diplomacy toward Indonesia. With Türkiye's soft power projection, along with the fact that Indonesia is one of the largest Muslim populations in Türkiye. Additionally, Türkiye is a country that has a high population of Muslims, which is one of the catalysts for Indonesian people to be attracted to accessing

further information about Türkiye. This is especially true for the adult female Indonesian population and Turkish men, giving them to opportunity to engage with each other, even having further personal relationships up to marriage. The relationship between religion and marriage has received attention, not only in Indonesia and Türkiye, but also in various countries around the world (Bossard and Boll, 1957; Yinger, 1968; Lehrer, 1998; Tarakeshwar and Pargament, 2001; Kalmijn and Tubergen, 2010; Webb et al., 2010). So even today, religion is still one of the critical specifications for many people in determining their life partner. In studies about the connection between faith and marriage, the relationship between religion and marriage has multi-faceted nature (Marks, 2004). It has been investigated through various dimensions, such as satisfaction in marriage, continuation of the marriage, dealing with problems in marriage, and other aspects of marriage, such as ethnicity, age, children, and religiousness, since “religion-family links may also vary according to ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, religious tradition, and other facets of social location” (Mahoney, 2010, p. 823). For instance, Brown et al. (2008) discovered that religion affected the duration of marriage with respect to gender and race. Later, they found that religious practices reduce the rate of divorce, especially for women. Finally, Dollahite and Marks (2009) connected religious context and marriage outcomes. They concluded that married couples followed religious rules because they believed these rules could positively affect their marriages.

Focusing on both the causes and consequences of a female-dominated flow of migration, Hsia Diner (1983) studied Irish immigrant women in the nineteenth century. Irish migration was pushed by conditions that prevailed throughout much of Europe at that time, including poverty, landlessness, and the social and economic dislocations that accompanied the transition from an agrarian feudal society to an industrial capital society (cf Bodnar, 1985). Even though women in marriage migration have reported a variety of reasons for crossing borders to find a husband, such as a sense of adventure, a desire to travel abroad, and experience a different world, the experience of significant failures (in romantic relationships or careers), freedom from hardships and family pressure, and love (Kojima, 2001; Mix and Piper, 2003; Nakamatsu, 2003), many academics and social commentators suggest an economic explanation. Women from developing nations desire spouses from developed nations who can offer them financial stability and assist them in supporting their family in their home country. Socio-economic aspects are the second factor we use to determine the pattern of cross-cultural marriage between Indonesian women and Turkish men.

Cross-cultural communication occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture. Cross-cultural miscommunication occurs when the person from the second culture does not receive the sender’s intended message. The greater the differences between the sender’s and the receiver’s cultures, the greater the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication (Adler, 1991). Sometimes there are faults or

obstacles in the communication system, which may prevent the message from reaching the intended receiver or its destination. Language barriers generally arise in three areas: how a message is originated and sent by a sender, environmental interruptions, and how it is to build relationships with others. They can cause misunderstandings that lead to conflict, frustration, offense, violence, hurt feelings, and wasting time, effort, money, and lives of the people (I.A.S Buarqoub, 2019).

While conflict within intimate inter-cultural relationships may be due to personality differences or situational factors (Garcia, 2006), inter-cultural conflict most often occurs because individuals hold diverse values and objectives and utilize distinctly different conflict and communication styles (Oetzel, Dhar, and Kirschbaum, 2007). In cross-cultural marriage, the partnership possesses its own unique dynamics and challenges. Research has further exposed the complexity of cross-cultural marriages, as the partners in such marriages are each “equipped with a different set of rules; different values, habits, and viewpoints, different ways of relating to one another, and different ways of resolving their differences” (Cools, 2006). As the tension between acculturation and deculturation continues, stress increases. This naturally occurs as individuals deal with necessity for change and the struggle to give up old values. It is an internal conflict that sometimes is evidenced by “uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety” (Kim, 2008). This anxiety can also lead to a lack of understanding between partners. Language barriers arise in these couples due to the Indonesian wife’s inability to communicate in Turkish and the Turkish husband’s inability to communicate in Indonesian. The conditions could be different if these couples can speak another foreign language, such as English. Based on English Proficiency Index from EF Education First, Indonesia is ranked 80th out of 112 countries. Whereas Turkey is ranked 70th. These two countries are in the category of low English language proficiency. From this we understand that there is no other language that they can use to communicate in their daily life (Education First, 2021).

Data & Methods

Migration statistics, as the first point of reference, is a general indicator of the size, composition, and characteristics of the migrant population and migration flow (IMISCOE, 2022). Measuring and numbers are integral to academic, professional, and political life. In addition, they can determine “a broader societal discourse on migration and thus also of its construction as a societal ‘problem’” (Kraler and Reichel, 2022). In this context, a set of statistics that provides a general understanding of how marriage migration surrounding Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms came to be and its characteristics are needed. This study is based on administrative data sources. For measuring migration, population registers are the most important source of statistics (Kraler and Reichel, 2022). Administrative data is valuable, not in terms of administrating an individual, but precisely to serve the production of statistics. However, this method is not without limitations The

use of administrative data may lead to systematic undercounting because some aspects of registration may not be able to be fully captured through the procedures (from undocumented to unregistered migrants or, in this case, unofficial marriages & incomplete applications) and the use of administrative data might face challenges in the form of “lack in comparability across the countries due to differences in administrative procedures” (Kraler and Reichel, 2022) or the lack of harmonization between the data. In the context of this study, the differences in the sets of data pools about marriages between Turkish male grooms and Indonesian brides may make some of them incomparable.

For understanding the emergence of marriage migration involving Indonesian brides in Türkiye, this study is based on the administrative records from various marriage registration applications that Indonesian Embassy in Ankara received between 2020 - 2022. Furthermore, this study focuses on and highlights specifically 82 cross-cultural married partners in the registration records, as it is the most complete and updated sample available. It was collected from January to July 2022. Throughout the study, quantitative approaches are used to analyze the administrative data; the findings are later discussed using a descriptive and discursive approach from a socio-cultural and socio-economic dimension in the context of marriage migration.

Findings

In the last three years, the Indonesian Embassy in Ankara recorded 450 marriage registrations between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms. Breaking it down, in 2020, there were 119 marriage registrations. The numbers doubled when the situation regarding the health protocol for the COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye became more relaxed. For example, in 2021, the total applications during that year recorded 221 marriage registration. In 2022, the Indonesian Embassy received approximately a total of 111 marriage registration between January and July. A higher number for the same month recorded 103 registrations. The Embassy expects higher, if not the same, registration numbers this year. At the end of 2021, the Turkish government announced visa-free travel for Indonesian coming to Türkiye, which might prompt a higher number of registrations.

In identifying the characteristics of the 87 cross-cultural marriages, the study uncovers various degrees of general overview and broad aspects deemed necessary in studying this marriage migration phenomenon. Of the 87 samples, 82 were cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms. In comparison, three samples in a reversed version involving Turkish brides and Indonesian grooms exist.

The study differentiated cross-cultural marriage into three groups based on their ages; the first is the young group which consisted of 19 people (under the age of 24), then continued with the majority group, the adult group, which consisted of 153 people (between the ages of 24-64) and two people in the elderly group (aged 65 and older).

The 82 Indonesian brides' backgrounds in their provinces in Indonesia vary. The top 5 provinces are: Banten (10 brides), West Java (17 brides), Central Java (13 brides), and Jakarta Special Region (7 brides). These provinces are primarily located on Java Island. The other majority province was Bali, where 13 brides were registered. It is an island of its own. The rest of the Indonesian brides were from 13 different provinces, including East Java (6 brides), North Sumatera (4 brides), West Sumatera (2 brides), Lampung (2 brides), East Borneo (2), South Borneo (1 bride), Riau Island (1 bride), North Sulawesi (1 bride), East Sulawesi (1 bride), South Sulawesi (1 bride), Aceh (1 bride), Nusa Tenggara Barat (1 bride), and Maluku (1 bride). The bride's background origins can be traced to 15 out of 37 provinces and five out of seven significant Islands (Bali, Borneo, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java) in Indonesia. Religion is also a notable aspect of this study; 76 out of 87 Indonesian brides are Muslim, and 11 of the brides are Hindus. The Hindu brides' origin can be traced to the Bali Province. This is not surprising considering that Bali is majority Hindu, with 86.8%, making the Hindu population in the province around 3.71 million (Katadata, 2021).

How Partners First Meet: Internet and Social Media Usage

Initially, the study identified two ways cross-cultural marriage partners to get to know each other: offline and online. In the first method, the study identified 34 partners who knew each other first in an offline setting. About nine brides knew their partners through a third party, either a family connection or friends. As a result, eight brides spent the shortest time before they decide on marriage through this method of introduction. They were married within less than a year after being introduced to each other. On average, they spent five months, and the shortest marriage partners spent three months getting to know each other. The longest one took six years and seven months before marriage. Other cross-cultural marriage partners knew each other through a direct meeting, for instance, a meetup in Türkiye, Indonesia, or other foreign country. For example, Indonesian brides, who were also initially from the Bali Province, came to Türkiye as spa therapists or in the private sector and met their Turkish spouses in a direct meeting, either as a co-worker or someone living in the same city they work.

Table 1. How each partner first meet

	Respondents	Percentages
Offline	29	36.71%
Online	50	63.29%
Total	79	100%

The rest of the majority, 50 cross-cultural marriage partners, met each other online. This can be separated into three categories. Social media was used by 38 marriage partners and dating app/sites by 11 married couples. The most popular social media was Facebook and

was used by 18 married couples. Meanwhile, other popular social media, like Instagram, were also highly favored by 11 married couples. Less popular social media, like Azar and Ablo, were also used, each by one married couple. Other types of chatting social media that offer a multilingual experience for the user, like Interpals (1 marriage partner), Slowly (1 married couple), and Speaky (3 married couples), also play a role in bridging a cross-cultural marriage. For dating apps, the study found that 11 married couples got to know each other through dating sites. Six marriage partners used Muslim dating sites, like Muslima and Muzmatch. Other dating apps were Europe Mingle (1 married couple), Airtripp (1 married couple), Hi - 5 (1 married couple), and Badoo (2 married couples).

Table 2. Mostly used social media & dating apps in first meetings

	Respondents	Percentages
Facebook	18	38.30%
Instagram	11	23.40%
Muslima.com	5	10.64%
Speaky	3	6.38%
Badoo	2	4.26%
Azar	1	2.13%
Ablo	1	2.13%
Interpals	1	2.13%
Slowly	1	2.13%
Muzmatch	1	2.13%
Europe Mingle	1	2.13%
Airtripp	1	2.13%
Hi-5	1	2.13%
Total	47	100%

Turkish Groom Career and Financial Capabilities

Table 3. Turkish groom financial capabilities

	Respondents	Percentages
Above Minimum Wage	34	42.50%
Minimum Wage	25	18.75%
Under Minimum Wage	31	38.75%
Total	80	100%

The data showed that cross-cultural marriage couples tend to stay and settle in Türkiye after marriage. The Indonesian bride must leave her host country and follow her husband to live a new life. As the head of the family, the husband is expected to be able to meet domestic needs financially. From the data obtained, 34 Turkish grooms found occupations with incomes above the minimum wage (440.29 EUR in 2022). Some work in

private companies as engineers, and some work in the hospitality sector, such as chefs. Other occupations were in the entrepreneurial and civil servant sectors. Seventeen earn minimum wage, working in the private sector as engineers, laborers, and retirees. Thirty-one of them earn below the minimum wage. They work in the private sector as laborers and farmers.

Indonesian Bride Education and Turkish Language Abilities

As the wives enter a new chapter in their lives, they are surrounded by a different culture, language, and new challenges. Here, education plays an essential part in building a better future and making better decisions that affect the family. Regarding Indonesian brides' education, only 21 out of 87 graduated from higher education, and 11 of them are undergraduate degree holders. There are seven vocational degree holders, two master's degree holders, and one doctoral degree holder. Beyond that, 38 of the brides graduated with a high school diploma. Another ten brides at least graduated with a middle school diploma. Seven brides only finished elementary school. The three least educated brides were not able to complete elementary school or were uneducated. The rest of the eight brides' education cannot be tracked.

Table 4. Indonesian bride education backgrounds

	Respondents	Percentages
High School	34	47.22%
Undergraduate Degree	11	15.28%
Junior High School	10	13.89%
Elementary School	7	9.72%
Vocaitonal School	7	9.72%
Master Degree	2	2.78%
PhD	1	1.39%
Total	72	100%

This data portion here is also reflected in the national women's profile by the Indonesian Government's Statistics Indonesia, better known as Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS); where female older than 15 in 2020 can be categorizes based on their last education degree. In 2021, the national statistics record 9.45% female older than 15 graduated from higher education, 29.10% graduated from high school or any equivalent degrees, 21.78% graduated from middle high school or any equivalent degrees, 24.80% only able to finished the elementary school and lastly 14.83% never went into any formal education or never receive an education at all (*Profil Perempuan Indonesia, 2021*). In the cross-cultural marriages the study examined, the demographic statistics recorded 24.13% of Indonesian brides were able to finish their higher education degrees. In comparison, the highest percentage, 43.67% of the brides, finished their high school degrees, 11.49% finished their middle school degrees, 8.04% finished elementary school, and 3.4% of the brides didn't

have any formal education degree yet or were uneducated.

Most Indonesian brides in cross-cultural marriages came to settle in Türkiye for a long time. For overcoming the language barrier, Indonesian brides' Turkish language proficiency can be categorized into three groups: basic, intermediate, and advanced. Indonesian brides' Turkish language self-assessment showed that 64 of the brides had a basic level of Turkish language skills, 15 brides were at an intermediate level, and two had advanced Turkish language proficiency.

Table 5. Indonesian bride Turkish Language abilities

	Respondents	Percentages
Basic	64	79.1%
Intermediate	15	18.52%
Advance	2	2.47%
Total	81	100%

Indonesian Brides' Belief Backgrounds

Of the 82 cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian and Turkish people, 71 people (85.59%) are Muslim, and 11 (13.41%) are Hindus. According to 2011 data from Family Structure in Türkiye Research, 50% of society considers religion indicative of spouse selection and 28% consider it very indicative (ASP, 2011, slide 60). Around 88% of society thinks religion is an important determinant when choosing a spouse. While 36% of Turkish society agrees that “women could marry men of different religion and nationality,” and 56% disagree with this idea. Also, 38% of society agrees with the notion that “denominational difference does not matter in marriage,” while 51% disagree with this idea (ASP, 2011, slide 56).

Table 6. Indonesian bride belief backgrounds

	Respondents	Percentages
Islam	71	86.59%
Hindu	11	13.41%
Total	82	100%

Discussion

Based on data from The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Türkiye, we can describe how the phenomenon of cross-cultural marriage between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms occurs. This study describes the data and relates it to social-cultural and socio-economic factors.

How Potential Couples Meet for the First Time

Through social-cultural factors, we see the patterns of how potential spouses meet. With rapid developments in technology today and the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years, social media users are increasing. Potential spouses also use this technology to get to know each other. In 2022, there were 202.6 million internet users in Indonesia and 69.95 million internet users in Türkiye and this increases the chances of meeting potential spouses in cyberspace. A study about Muslim communities in England shows that people are getting more comfortable with online dating rather than meeting in person (de Rooij, 2020). This is also supported by statistics from The Indonesian Embassy in Türkiye, where it shows that 50 couples got to know each other through social media. Globalization and digitalization have created a new way of life called the modern liquid life (Bauman, 2003). The internet and social media make it possible to connect with people who have never seen each other before, changing the dating process (Lawson and Leck, 2006).

Interestingly, six cross-cultural married couples met for the first time using the help of Muslim dating apps. The main difference between a Muslim dating app and average dating apps is that the platform grants the user options in choosing the parameters of some religious aspects (de Rooij, 2020), for example; how religious is the partner you seek?, is he/she a Sunni, Shia or other?, is he/she practicing Muslim?, does she/he pray five times a day?, less or not practicing at all?, does she/he eat halal products only or not?, does he/she drink alcohol?, and does he/she smoke?.

Since the Muslim dating platform's purpose is to bridge a relationship that leads to or promotes a marriage, the platforms also allow the users to customize and show other users their marriage plan, like how long it will take them to marry. Users can put a target like, the shortest time possible or immediately, within 1-2 years, 3-4 years, or more than 4 years. Through the use of Muslim dating apps, "users can customize the ideal traits of partner they want," and ultimately, in a highly diverse society, the users seek a way to search for potential partners that guarantee Muslim identity in an Islamic way (de Rooij, 2020).

This indicates that Turkish grooms and Indonesian brides that live in relatively diverse societies within their own countries socio-culturally appreciate religious or conservative values and actively seek an ideal Muslim partner throughout the platforms, even though they are distantly located in different countries. According to a study, Indonesia ranks among the most religious countries, with 83% of surveyed adults favoring the increased role of religion in the country (Pew Research Center, 2019). The fact that both Indonesia and Türkiye are Muslim majority countries, in which Islam promotes religious devoutness as the essential criteria for a healthy family (Yatkin, 2010), reflects the usage of Muslim dating apps, especially for the Muslim Indonesian brides in this study.

Language Barriers as Dynamic Challenges

Another finding obtained from the data is Indonesian women's ability to speak the Turkish language when marrying Turkish men. The data shows that out of 87 couples, 64 Indonesian women came to Türkiye without Turkish language proficiency, which can cause communication issues with their Turkish husbands and their families. Moreover, by coming to Türkiye, they have to enter a new world with a new system and try to join and adapt to a new community. Most researchers have suggested that cross-cultural marriages create various problems and concerns because of cultural differences and language barriers (Fu and Heaton, 2000; Hsu, 2001).

Social relationships of an international marriage migrant from an Asian country often involve relationships with both her husband and her in-laws, especially in rural areas. Therefore, not only gender ideology but also generational, cultural, and legal status differences complicate social relationships within the family. Thus, the family can be a site of gender and racial oppression (Burgess, 2004; Nakamatsu 2003; Piper, 1997). A salient issue for Asian marriage migrants is communication difficulty. Asian wives' limited proficiency in the affinal language can intensify both the women's isolation and misunderstandings and tensions between women, their husbands, and cohabiting in-laws (Kim, 2008; Nakamatsu, 2003). Language barriers are semantic problems that arise during the process of encoding or decoding the message into words and ideas, respectively. They are one of the main barriers that limit effective communication. They are the most common communication barriers that cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations between people. They indicate difficulties that two people, who do not share a common language, face when they try to communicate with each other (I.A.S Buarqoub, 2019).

There are, however, potential conflicts if the worldviews of the spouses are very discrepant. Strain can also come from the disapproval of family, friends, and institutions. Families of origin may differ significantly in their values and rituals. Either or both families may object to a cultural outsider. The new spouse may experience culture shock or feel ill at ease with the family of the other (Falicov, 1996). Research conducted by Lewis and Yancey (1995) and Lewis (1994) shows evidence that couples in cross-cultural marriages perceived a higher occurrence of racial discrimination compared with those who married within the same ethnic group. For example, Fu et al. (2001) contend that cross-cultural marriages face more significant challenges than racially homogenous marriages because of cultural differences and language barriers that generate family tension and result in lower marital happiness and satisfaction. Differences in cultural values, beliefs, social norms, and negative social perceptions were the main stressors in cross-cultural marriages. (Bus-tamante et al., 2011).

Earlier studies stress the importance of the health status of married migrant women, as they were likely to experience lower levels of social, physical, and psychological health

(Jang and Kim, 2012; Yang and Shin, 2013). Yang and Shin (2013) sought to understand the relationship between health and international marriages, and based on their analysis, the central issue addressing women in such marriages was cultural conflict and negative social perceptions of international marriages. Jang and Kim (2012) identified the adaptation challenges experienced by women in international marriages in Korea as a different family structures, lack of cultural understanding, cultural differences, and language barriers that generated social anxiety, loneliness, and lower levels of self-expression.

Socio-economic Factors

According to the World Bank (n.d), Türkiye has an upper-middle-income status. On the other hand, with its economy impacted by the pandemic, Indonesia went from an upper-middle income to lower-middle income status, as of July 2021. Therefore, economics are one factor Indonesian brides are highly considering when choosing to marry Turkish grooms, assuming they can gain a better life and settle down in a new environment. Instead of stressing solely one purpose of marriage, these scholars contend that what better life marriage migrants hope to achieve encompasses various elements, including a caring middle-class husband, children, affection, love, financial security, and personal career advancement (Constable, 2003b; Piper, 1997). The data shows that Turkish grooms originate from 37 cities. There are five cities that the most grooms came from, including Ankara, Antalya, Giresun, Izmir, and Manisa. These cities are where cross-cultural marriage couples with Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms live. Based on the data that the Embassy of Indonesia in Türkiye compiled, 6 Turkish grooms from Ankara earn above minimum wage (440.29 EUR in 2022). One of them earns minimum wage, and two of them earn under minimum wage.

With this condition, we can see that the financial condition of Turkish grooms is also one of the crucial qualifications in addition to religion. Based on the data, the cross-cultural marriage couples who live in Ankara tends to earn above minimum wage. Turkish grooms who work in the private sector as engineers, government sector as civil servants, and hospitality sector as chefs are occupations that require a high level of education. On the other hand, the four Turkish grooms in cross-cultural marriage couples who live in Antalya and Manavgat earn under minimum wage. Contrary to the couples living in the capital city Ankara, the Indonesian brides in cross-cultural marriages couples who live in Antalya and Manavgat are likely have occupations as spa therapists. Cross-cultural marriages also occurred in several other cities in Türkiye, including Mersin, Muğla, Denizli and Hatay. This shows that both wives and husbands need to earn financial income to support the family.

Conclusion

With easy access, cross-cultural marriages between Indonesian brides and Turkish grooms is predicted to increase. This is supported by the pattern seen today, starting from the convenience for potential spouses to meet online and in person because of the ease of tourist visas for Indonesian tourists. The highly progressive digitalization factor is one of the prominent reason and way these potential spouses meet. The high number of social media users in Indonesia and Türkiye increases the probability of potential spouses getting to know each other virtually before deciding to meet face-to-face. This together with the occurrences of dating apps especially Muslim dating apps will boost the number of cross-cultural marriages in Türkiye.


On the other hand, Indonesia, as one of the labor supply country in the hospitality sector and as a growing source for international students' in Türkiye's higher education mobility, thus any Indonesian female in Türkiye, whether it might be student, tourist or migrant labor workers they can easily meet any potential local Turkish man face to face that leads to cross-cultural marriage. This study predicts there will be more surges of Indonesian females in direct meetings with potential spouses. Among Indonesian females are people who work as spa therapists that are originally from the Bali Province. They meet their partners in their workplace in Türkiye, mostly at hotels or the city they work in, such as Antalya, Manavgat and Ankara. And the fact that most Balinese brides are Hindus is already an interesting subject to be researched further; such questions regarding the value of diversity when choosing a Hindu bride among Turkish grooms while taking into consideration the male's qualitative parameters are worthy to be discussed in further studies.

Several factors support cross-cultural marriage couples deciding to live together. For example, socio-cultural factors, including Türkiye's soft power influence in Indonesia through film, fashion, news, music, food, and education. In addition, as both countries are labeled as Muslim countries, many of these cross-cultural marriage couples decide to marry based on having the same religion. Other reasoning is based on economic factors, where one of the goals of cross-cultural marriages is to seek a better standard of living.

Generally, Indonesian brides have a low proficiency in Turkish. The brides' lack of communication skills causes a significant probability of issues, such as miscommunication, misunderstanding, as well as possibly the worst, culture shock experienced by the bride in a new environment. To be able to adapt to new surroundings, Indonesian brides gathered and became a community in Türkiye. This community is a place for Indonesian brides to communicate with each other and offer a support system. In the future, further research is needed to examine in-depth post-migration experiences for both sides; aiming to identify the challenges that might or currently occur in post-migration experiences.

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