INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS OF INDONESIAN IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of intercultural communication experienced by Indonesian immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia is an issue in this study. With the cultural background that Indonesian citizens have as immigrant workers, there will certainly be complex dynamics of intercultural communication processes in everyday life, especially in the process of the work environment. This study aims to identify the factors that are crucial in the success of cross-cultural adaptation of Indonesian citizens in Saudi Arabia and also to analyze the personal experiences of Indonesian immigrants in the dynamic process of social interaction and cross-cultural adaptation in the work environment based on differences in language, values, norms and local habits. Using qualitative research methods and phenomenological traditions to determine the criteria for interviewees, namely people who do work in Saudi Arabia, which focuses on in-depth interviews with Indonesian immigrant workers to explore intercultural communication processes such as communication habits, cultural adaptation, the overall impact of intercultural communication dynamics in the work environment for Indonesian immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Immigrant Worker, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRAK

Dinamika komunikasi antarbudaya yang dialami oleh pekerja imigran Indonesia di Saudi Arabia menjadi isu dalam penelitian ini. Dengan latar belakang budaya yang dimiliki oleh warga Indonesia sebagai pekerja imigran, tentu akan adanya dinamika proses komunikasi antarbudaya yang kompleks dalam kehidupan sehari-hari khususnya terjadi dalam proses lingkungan kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang krusial dalam keberhasilan adaptasi lintas budaya Warga Negara Indonesia di Arab Saudi dan juga untuk menganalisis pengalaman pribadi imigran Indonesia pada proses dinamika interaksi sosial dan adaptasi antar lintas budaya di lingkungan kerja yang didasari dari perbedaan Bahasa, nilai, norma dan kebiasaan lokal. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dan tradisi fenomenologi untuk menentukan kriteria narasumber yakni orang yang memang bekerja di Saudi Arabia yang berfokus pada wawancara mendalam pekerja imigran Indonesia untuk menggali proses komunikasi antarbudaya seperti kebiasaan komunikasi, adaptasi budaya, dampak keseluruhan dari dinamika komunikasi antar budaya dalam lingkungan kerja bagi pekerja imigran Indonesia di Saudi Arabia.

Kata Kunci: Dinamika Komunikasi Antarbudaya; Pekerja Imigran; Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Communication allows individuals to learn through various things, such as symbol forms and host cultural practices.

Communication can also help individuals in the aspects of receiving, processing, and responding to information obtained from other cultural environments. This is

because every culture has different ways of interacting and communicating for each country and culture (Alkharusi, 2018). In this communication, there is a process of communication stages from the process of sending information, receiving messages, what media is used, to how the effects of communication occur. Many types of communication exist in life in society, one of which is intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is common among people who decide to be present in diversity in their daily environment and is often done by migrants. Moving from a place of origin to a new or unfamiliar place known as migrating is a common thing done by adult individuals. This is common as individuals try to get the best things for their personal lives. Not only immigrating within the country, many individuals try to go overseas.

Apart from the many individuals who travel abroad, there are also many individuals who travel to the country. One of the countries that receives many Indonesian Migrant Workers is Saudi Arabia. According to Bank Indonesia (n.d) Indonesian Immigrant Workers (PMI) in Saudi Arabia was 836,000 people. The second largest after Indonesia's neighboring countries, namely, Malaysia This has led to intercultural communication that occurs among domestic and foreign communities. Differences become a benchmark and basis for each individual in carrying out the process of communication, adaptation, decision making to adjust all aspects of his life in an environment.

Not only in the context of interactions between individuals, adjusting to a very different culture is one of the biggest challenges in the adaptation process as Saudi Arabian culture is more collectivist and community-based. Saudi Arabia has a thick and strong culture so that expatriates need to follow the values and norms that exist in the country (Jackson & Manderscheid, 2015). The challenges in intercultural communication that occur and are experienced by expatriates can then affect their social interactions and professional activities. The main challenges include language barriers, cultural differences and social values, different communication styles, strict religious norms, and ethical standards and customs in the workplace.

With standardized values, social norms, and language, adjusting to family life is another challenge. Many expatriation failures are caused by family members' inability to adapt to the new environment (Tahir & Egleston, 2019). Such failures include difficulties in finding a place to live, finding housing, schools, and support systems, bank accounts, and finding shopping areas.

Apart from various factors, according to Rahardjo *et al.* (2018) expatriates often experience a sense of confusion in adapting due to personal and cultural changes between their place of origin and the culture of the country where they work. On the other hand, Wang and Varma (2019) have identified a failure rate of 25 to 40 percent for international relocations that end in early return especially in developing countries. Such adaptation failure is certainly something that every party wants to avoid, as making a move is not only costly, but also time and energy consuming. Therefore, Kim (2017) argues that communication can help in the adaptation process. As every individual's life is inseparable from communication,

especially in the context of working with other individuals.

According to Wang and Varma (2019) the reasons leading to this failure rate include: (1) the inability of the spouse to adapt to the host culture; (2) the inability of the expatriates themselves to adapt to the host culture; and (3) family issues related to the overseas assignment.

Based on data obtained from Indonesia Ministry of Manpower (2023) , 168 thousand foreign workers are dominated by China with a total of 82,623 people, followed by Japan with 15,961 people, South Korea with 15,660 people, India with 8,747 people and various other countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines, the United States, and other countries. Based on data from the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency or BP2MI (in Muhamad , 2024), there were around 135 thousand workers from Indonesia who departed abroad as of June 2023. The destinations for overseas departures include Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Italy, and Poland (Muhamad, 2024).

Although it is not the country with the most departure destinations, Saudi Arabia enters the top 10 countries visited by Indonesians for work. Despite the cultural similarities between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, there are also some cultural differences or values and norms that challenge Indonesians to live with communities in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has implemented bilingual language in its life, as its people use Arabic and English (Visit Saudi, 2024). However, Saudi Arabia has a culture that is quite different from other countries. This is inseparable from various adjustments from work norms, isolation, housing, health services, customs, living costs, gender roles, and even language (Dousin & Sulong, 2021).

Jackson and Manderscheid (2015) found cultural adaptation challenges in Saudi Arabia, such as the lack of social interaction between Saudi Arabians and immigrants or expatriates, limited social activities, and limited interaction with the opposite sex. On the other hand, expatriates or immigrants are less valued or appreciated because they are not native to Saudi Arabia (Alanazi & Yates, 2022).

Jackson and Manderscheid (2015) also found that gender segregation slowed down social activities. As most locals are reluctant to leave their wives to participate in activities carried out with expatriates. It is also a culture shock for local residents, as they feel uncomfortable to leave their spouses just to participate in social activities.

In the results of Dousing and Sulong's research (2021), it was found that some expatriates experienced culture shock at the beginning of their careers in Saudi Arabia. This is due to the very distinctive cultural differences that almost never exist in other western countries. This thick cultural difference is a challenge to adapt to a new culture.

Most research on expatriate cultural adaptation is research with western culture, such as research conducted by Dousing and Sulong (2021), and Jackson and Manderscheid (2015). This is of interest to researchers to see from the point of view of eastern culture. On the other hand, in the domestic context, research studies on Indonesian expatriates come from Thailand

As for expatriate research in the country of Saudi Arabia is still very little, such as research on western expatriates in

Saudi Arabia (Jackson & Manderscheid, 2015), expatriates who work as nurses in Saudi Arabia (Alaniza & Yates, 2022), western female expatriates in Saudi Arabia (Harrison & Michailova, 2012). Meanwhile, there are still very few studies of Indonesians who are expatriates in Saudi Arabia, such as research on nurses in Saudi Arabia (Zaghloul et al, 2019).

Therefore, it can be said that the novelty of this study compared to previous studies is the use of Indonesian informants who are expatriates in Saudi Arabia with formal or office jobs. This research focuses on the adjustment of each individual's interaction with the 3-structure approach by Kim (2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research conducted by Mulia, Rahardjo, and Ayun aimed to understand the cultural adaptation process of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, identify the barriers they face, and strategies to overcome them. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach and involved five Indonesian migrant workers who had worked in Taiwan for at least one year. The results show that they experienced culture shock upon arrival, especially in terms of language and work culture. To deal with it, they applied communication strategies such as integration, separation, and convergence, as well as assertive and aggressive accommodation communication strategies to overcome social stigma and discrimination. After the adaptation process, there were improvements in work skills, psychological health, and intercultural identity.

Another study by Alkharusi and Juma addressed cross-cultural communication in the Middle East by considering the historical, demographic and cultural complexities of the region. The study focused on the impact of demographic changes on the host Arab culture. The results highlight the influence of culture on communication styles, the role of the family in maintaining social stability, and the diverse views of women in the context of values and gender roles. In addition, the research also reveals the dynamics of intergroup interactions influenced by cultural duality, the role of education in individual development, and the influence of business culture in economic practices.

Mandari and Boer examined the adaptation process of Japanese expatriates in Indonesia by identifying factors that influence their adaptation as well as critical points in the process. Using ethnographic methods, the study involved in-depth interviews and observations of four Japanese expatriates working in a company in Semarang. The results showed that Indonesian language skills, work culture adjustment, media use, interaction with local people and the Japanese community, and company support were the main factors in their adaptation. The three stages of adaptation they went through included preparation, active, and final stages, with language skills and mental readiness as crucial factors. The study also found that the longer expatriates live and work in Indonesia, the more comfortable they are in interacting with the local community.

Sterle and Filipic examined the conditions of expatriates and their families while living abroad, finding that they face a variety of challenges and stress. Barriers

include adaptation to a new culture, lack of preparation and financial support related to relocation, loss of a sense of "home", changes in social environment, and demands in organizing life in a new location such as the education system and learning the local culture and language. Family members, including children, teenagers and accompanying spouses, have different challenges. While international experiences can strengthen family relationships, there is also a risk of isolation and loneliness felt by expatriate families.

Adams and Van De Vijver highlight the increasing number of expatriates in the international workforce which drives the acculturation process. This study examines expatriate identity by linking acculturation and the tridimensional model of identity, namely personal, relational and social identity. The study explores how acculturation relates to expatriates' identity development, as well as their reasons for adopting a more cosmopolitan or pragmatic approach to the expatriation experience. In addition, this study highlights the importance of this understanding for organizations in helping expatriates manage their identity processes, although the influence of organizations on personal identity remains limited.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method, which is the source of a broad and firmly grounded description, and contains an explanation of the processes that occur within the local scope, Miles and Huberman (2018) interview Therefore, the use of qualitative methods in research can produce a more comprehensive study of a phenomenon. Qualitative research that pays attention to humanism or individual humans and human behavior is an answer to the realization that all consequences of human actions are affected by the internal aspects of the individual. These internal aspects such as beliefs, political views, and the social background of the individual concerned. This research will conduct in-depth interviews with immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia with a phenomenological approach and involve two Indonesian immigrant workers who had worked in Saudi Arabia. Based on the interviewees' experiences while working in an environment filled with cultural backgrounds that are different from theirs. This research is conducted with qualitative methodology so that the results of this research produce in-depth analysis in accordance with the communication process experienced by the interviewees.

The interpretive paradigm focuses on an in-depth understanding of the meaning that individuals give to their life experiences in a particular context. In this study, the interpretive paradigm is suitable because the aim is to understand the subjective experiences of immigrant workers in communicating and adapting in different cultural environments. This paradigm does not seek to find universal objective truths, but rather to understand the unique perspectives and interpretations of immigrant workers.

The object of this research is Indonesian immigrant workers who work in companies in Saudi Arabia.Data collection techniques in this study were carried out in three ways, namely using in-depth interviews with resource persons. By using techniques as well as based on documents from interviews, researchers will be able to analyze the process of

communication dynamics that exist in intercultural communication of immigrant workers, how then researchers can criticize and evaluate the impact of the intercultural communication process.

The in-depth interview method is the same as other interview methods, only the role of the interviewer, the purpose of the interview, the role of the informant, and how to conduct the interview are different from interviews in general Bungin (2010). The interviews that will be conducted by researchers are informal interviews, asking in-depth questions to informants so that they are more free in asking questions to approach communication events that occur in informants.

RESEARCH OBJECT

In this study, interviews were conducted with two Indonesian citizens (WNI) with a background of working in Saudi Arabia who became informants in this study. FS, a 53-year-old man, has a bachelor's degree. Currently, FS is an Information Technology Manager in his company with 16 years of work experience. From the beginning of working in Saudi Arabia until now FS has had a Long Distance Relationship (LDR) with his family in Indonesia, returning home only during Eid holidays to adjust to the holiday schedule that applies in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, J, a 48-year-old man with a bachelor's degree, had served as Information Technology Manager at a company in Saudi Arabia and had 12 years of work experience. In the first year of working in Saudi Arabia J only went alone, but in the second year J brought his wife and child to live in Saudi Arabia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview results, both informants can be referred to as immigrant workers who decided to work in Saudi Arabia based on their own life choices. The informants had no previous experience working in the Saudi Arabian environment.

Personal Communication

Based on the interview regarding the host language skills of Arabic, Indonesian citizens lack Arabic skills especially in daily life, but are more skilled in office work. FS claims that he has limitations in knowing and understanding in Arabic. FS finds it difficult to write and read words or sentences in Arabic. FS admitted that she still finds it difficult to talk to Arabs outside the office such as with shop or bank workers. FS also thought that communication in the office was easier because most of the conversations in the office were in English. FS also found that the English of Arabs tends to be easier to understand than the English of natives such as Americans, Australians, or the UK.

J also face the the same problem as FS, J has no difficulty in communicating with locals in the office, as conversations conducted within the office use English. However, J has difficulty communicating in Arabic with locals when not in the office area. FS and J tend to use body language and translator tools in communicating with locals outside the office. On the other hand, Kim (2017) states that the emotional aspect of communication competence with the host community can be a push for newcomers. This encouragement arises from affective factors that reflect

individual emotions in a communication situation.

The challenges of communicating with Arabs did not motivate FS and J to learn Arabic. However, FS tries to remember words or sentences that are often used in everyday life such as 'keep going or in Arabic استمر (*Istamir*)', 'how much is the price or in Arabic كم السعر؟ (*Kam as-si'r?*)', and 'in which direction or in Arabic في أي اتجاه؟ (*Fi ayyi ittijah?*)'. Meanwhile, J tends to remember words in numerical contexts such as money. For example, he remembers 1, 2, and 3 as Wāḥid (واحد), Ithnān (اثنان), Thalātha (ثلاثة) and 10 riyals as Asharah Riyālāt (عشرة ريالات). J also said that there were regrets about not learning Arabic while living in Saudi Arabia.

Work Culture Differences

Based on Kim's theory (2001) The way individuals adapt to a new work environment is influenced by their prior socialization and cultural background, which shapes their expectations, communication styles, and problem-solving approaches in a professional setting. In addition to language differences, Indonesian nationals mentioned that the difference in work culture between Arabs and Indonesians caused culture shock. FS was surprised by the way Arabs communicate with people from Eastern countries. As Arabs, regardless of gender, they tend to greet each other by kissing on the cheek, which is very different from Indonesian culture where kissing on the cheek is still considered taboo.

On the other hand, in the context of work, Arabs tend to be punctual in their work which is in accordance with the statement "Monochronic cultures view time as linear and segmented, while polychronic cultures see time as fluid and relationally driven Kim (2017) here Arabs always come back to the office on time after break time, this is different from Indonesian culture which tends to be more relaxed, such as time for coffee or even smoking which here these expatriate residents must understand monochronic cultures that must value punctuality and efficiency in work. J claims to feel the same way regarding the work ethic of Arabs and Indonesians, J says that Arabs tend to do work that is in accordance with the field mastered or the initial provisions when entering work. This is different from Indonesians who tend to do all kinds of office work, even though it is not their original job description. J claims to prefer Arabic culture in the context of work, as J feels more focused and feels the development in his skills this is in accordance with what is stated in Kim (2001) "High-context cultures rely more on implicit communication and shared experiences, while low-context cultures emphasize explicit and direct messaging" where Saudi Arabians prefer to use Low-context cultures or direct communication.

Interpersonal Communication Contacts and Activities

Kim (2017) "Host interpersonal communication activities, including those via social media, help strangers to obtain vital information and insight into the mindsets and behaviors of the local people." Regarding the question about their interpersonal relationships and social activities in Arabia, both expatriates said that local staff are not friends or bosom buddies, but colleagues who share the same goal of moving the company forward. However, FS said that he tends to

hang out more with other expats such as Filipinos, and fellow Indonesians. FS also stated that life in Arabia is preoccupied with work so that he does not have time to establish friendships with Arabs. J also has the same opinion as FS, as J has family in Saudi Arabia, so J think there is no free time to hang out with local people.

From the interviews, both expatriates utilize technology to facilitate communication. All expatriates use Whatsapp to communicate with local staff. Apart from using Whatsapp, they also use email to communicate with Arab employees. As for communicating with local residents outside the office, FS and J use a translation tool such as Google Translate. Not only that, they sometimes use hand gestures or body language.

Regarding intrapersonal communication with fellow ethnic groups, both expatriates know that there are special communities for Indonesians. These communities focus on the Christian/Catholic religious community. As expatriates working in Saudi Arabia both have Catholic and Christian religions and Saudi Arabia believers that have no other religion other than Muslim so other religions have to do their activities not in house of worship . So according to FS, participation in the community provides various positive impacts besides the religious context, such as providing information about rules and customs in Arabia, helping to find a place to live, being a place to share experiences and social support. Meanwhile, J uses the community to gather to perform religious services and to get information about Indonesian foods found in Saudi Arabia.

Environment

From the results of the interviews, the two expatriates said that they felt safe with the situation compared to Indonesia because of the low crime rate. This is in accordance with Kim's statement (2001) host receptivity refers to the degree to which the environment is open to, welcomes, and accepts strangers into its social networks.

Kim (2017) also said that "Host conformity pressure challenges strangers to adopt the normative patterns of the host culture. explains the pressure experienced by individuals to conform to the habits and norms of the new environment in this case Both expatriates said that it was difficult to find food while in Saudi Arabia, F had difficulty in food because there was little variety compared to Indonesia, while J, who prefers rice as the main food source, had difficulty because food in Arabia is bread-based.

F and J said that they had experienced culture shock when they first arrived in Saudi Arabia, this was due to the rules of worship hours which caused the cessation of economic activity in the Arab country. This includes the closing of shops, the cessation of manual transaction activities, and others. As a result of this rule, J claims he needs to download the prayer time application in order to know the hours of worship to adjust to the surrounding activities. This was caused by J's experience while eating close to Maghrib time. While J was eating, the shop was suddenly closed because the shop owner had to perform their obligatory prayer. During the month of Ramadan, both expatriates have to adjust to the pattern of life and working hours that change due to the religious month. As activities start after breaking the fast until dawn which makes them have to re-adjust

to the conditions during the month of Ramadan. This is certainly different from the conditions in Indonesia, regardless of being in the month of Ramadan or fasting, there are still several places that operate, so it does not interfere with individual activities.

Mass Media

F and J came to Saudi Arabia at the same time in 2008. In that year, in Saudi Arabia there was no internet with smartphones to facilitate information, making it difficult for F and J to access wider information.

After Internet access was obtained in Saudi Arabia, F said social media and mass media were very helpful in understanding the rules and policies in Saudi Arabia, while J used television media to provide entertainment as well as an educational tool to teach English to his children

Kim (2001) says "Heavy reliance on ethnic mass communication may limit exposure to host cultural norms, slowing down the adaptation process which is in accordance with what F and J feel. F and J get information based on Indonesian citizens who first lived in Arabia. Kim (2001) in the theory explains that the use of ethnic mass communication helps to relieve the pressure encountered by individual immigrants in dealing with the host environment because it can help fulfill the needs of newcomers for pleasure and relaxation. Both expatriates use Internet media as a means of communication. F uses the Internet to get information about the place of residence and local rules in Saudi Arabia, while J uses the Internet as a means of communicating with his family in Indonesia despite having difficulties

because in 2008 the Internet was still limited.

Predisposition

Kim (2001) revealed that predisposition refers to the innate characteristics of each individual which then affect their ability to adapt to a new cultural environment. This includes three main aspects, the first being preparedness for change. In this aspect, both expatriates initially decided to go to Saudi Arabia for reasons of financial need with individual psychological readiness and skills possessed. Without expectations and knowing the culture and social environment that exists in Saudi Arabia, both of them feel that they have prepared mentally and fully prepared themselves and are ready to accept the new cultural changes that exist in Saudi Arabia.

In the second aspect, namely Ethnic Proximity or closeness between the ethnic distance owned by each of FS and J with the host culture. At this stage both of them feel differences such as religion, language, social norms that exist at first do experience culture shock, but over time they feel accustomed and can directly follow the social system that exists in the office environment and outside the office.

In the third aspect/stage, namely Adaptive Personality, which refers to how the personality qualities that a person has can help the process of adjusting to a new environment. FS does not really care about prejudice against expatriates working in Saudi Arabia and only focuses on his work but FS is still willing to accept the social norms that apply in the work environment. In contrast to J who had a negative stereotype of Arabs, but his views changed after interacting directly with the people of

Saudi Arabia so that J regretted that he did not learn Arabic earlier because he felt he could adapt more easily if he mastered it. In addition, because J brought her family to Saudi Arabia and her child attended school in a new environment with new social norms, the adaptation process was not only carried out by J in the office environment, but also her entire family with local residents.

Both expatriates in this overall aspect have good readiness in themselves since the beginning of deciding to become immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia, have a strong sense of tolerance for differences in culture and social norms and a flexible personality, so that they experience a fast and smooth adaptation process despite the various cultural environmental challenges faced. Both have an optimistic outlook and a positive attitude towards new experiences and challenges with an attitude of openness to the culture and social norms prevailing in Saudi Arabia.

Intercultural Transformation

As newcomers, F and J experienced intercultural change and had to adapt to Arab culture. Kim (2017) said that improved communication function (functional fitness), psychological health (psychological health), and intercultural identity (intercultural identity).

In Functional Fitness, F began to understand the pattern of activity hours and adjust to local habits, then in the aspect of Psychological Health, although both expatriates experienced difficulties in adapting to local rules and culture, but over time, both expatriates became accustomed and able to accept changes in the way of thinking and interacting with the culture of Saudi Arabia. This shows a

decrease in stress and an increase in comfort in interacting with the culture of Saudi Arabia.

Finally, in Intercultural identity, J brought his family to Saudi Arabia and managed to make his family feel at home. This shows that J has experienced intercultural transformation and accepted Saudi Arabia culture as part of his life.

On the other hand, over time the modernization that took place in Saudi Arabia such as allowing women to work, drive, and having cinemas and concerts made F and J feel at home in Saudi Arabia. Like F and J, they initially had difficulty experiencing psychological and social changes in dealing with the new culture.

Stages of the Intercultural Adaptation Process

In the process when someone experiences the process of cultural change, there are stages of the adaptation process carried out. The adaptation process is divided into several parts. Kim's theory describes cross-cultural adaptation through stress, adaptation, and growth. From the interview results, the stages of adaptation experienced by the two expatriates from Indonesia are known. The first stage is called the Honeymoon Stage. At this stage, upon their arrival in Saudi Arabia, F and J tried to accept all the cultural differences and rules that apply, with a sense of self and mental readiness.

This preparation is done by both of them independently without any learning and training done before departure, just based on their main goal to be ready to work in a new environment with all the different conditions from life in their home environment. This is the initial stage where individuals are still enthusiastic about the

new culture but begin to face challenges such as language and local cultural policies. Challenges such as adapting to the language, prayer times and strict rules which then also change the patterns and forms of people's habits during Ramadan, and local cultural policies.

The next stage is followed by the Adjustment Stage or adaptation stage, where F and J begin to understand the habits of the Arab community such as understanding habits, Islamic worship times, and how to interact with local residents of Saudi Arabia. In this adaptation stage, both expatriates try to be active in adjusting to their work and living environment. At the beginning of their arrival, both felt assisted by their coworkers in the office, because other communication media factors such as social media did not exist at that time. At this stage, both of them must functionally be able to carry out their roles and functions in accordance with the work system that applies in their company. Factors such as education and skills and motivation support this adaptation process to run quickly and smoothly according to the needs of each of them and the needs of the company. Because of the demands of the job as well as the environment in which they live, which requires interaction and adjustment to the work culture and environment. After years of living in Saudi Arabia and through various experiences of the interaction process, both feel more confident and understand how to interact with local Saudi Arabians. This is also felt because over the years, the environment and regulations policies in Saudi Arabia have undergone several changes from previous years set by the King of Saudi Arabia.

The third stage is growth, which is the last stage which is the growth of individuals in a new environment which is usually also known as the Integration Stage. Where J brought his family to Saudi Arabia then built a house and bought a car for facilities while there, also decided for his son to go to school in Saudi Arabia. While F began to feel more balanced between Indonesian and Saudi Arabian cultures where he was very open to the local culture and work system in his office environment. F and J have reached the last stage because they not only know but are also at the stage of understanding and accepting the local culture and norms of Saudi Arabia as part of their daily lives but also not forgetting or leaving the culture they had before.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the cross-cultural adaptation process of Indonesian immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia involves various challenges, including differences in language, work culture, and social norms. Both expatriates, FS and J, faced barriers in communication due to limited Arabic, although they were more comfortable communicating in English in the work environment. They overcome this barrier by using translators and body language in their daily interactions. In addition, differences in work culture were also a factor that affected their adaptation, where they had to adjust to a more structured and punctual work culture compared to that in Indonesia.

From a social aspect, both expatriates interacted more with the fellow expatriate community than the local community, which suggests that their

adaptation was more likely to be functional rather than integrative. However, their participation in faith-based communities provided social support that helped them understand the rules and customs in Saudi Arabia. Modernization in Saudi Arabia, such as increased social freedoms and access to technology, also contributed to their adaptation process.

Referring to Kim's (2001) theory, their adaptation process follows three stages, namely stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. At first, they experienced culture shock to the norms and rules in Saudi Arabia, but over time, they began to understand and adjust to the new environment. In the final stage, they managed to integrate better, with J bringing his family to stay and F feeling more comfortable with the balance between Indonesian and Saudi Arabian cultures. The key factors in their successful adaptation were mental readiness, openness to change, and willingness to understand the local culture.

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