

Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution: Family Communication of Millennial Married Couples with Different Cultures

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ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural marriage in the millennial generation presents unique communication challenges, particularly in managing conflict and fostering family harmony. This study aims to explore how millennial married couples from different cultures develop communication skills for conflict resolution and adaptation. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research involved ten married couples from diverse cultural backgrounds who participated in in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that effective communication skills include adapting to a partner's communication style, employing empathy-based conflict resolution strategies, and utilizing non-verbal communication to alleviate tension. Face Negotiation Theory serves as the primary framework for understanding how couples adjust their communication to maintain relational balance. Furthermore, couples who prioritize openness, active listening, and effective emotional management tend to exhibit more harmonious and stable relationships. The implications of this study offer valuable insights for cross-cultural couples, marriage counselors, and academics seeking to understand the dynamics of family communication within the context of cultural diversity.

KEYWORDS *family communication, conflict resolution, cross-cultural marriage, millennial couples, Face Negotiation Theory*



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INTRODUCTION

In marriage, effective communication is the key to maintaining domestic harmony (Marellia & Caropeboka, 2022). This becomes more complex when the couple comes from different cultural backgrounds. The millennial generation, born between 1981 and 1996, is a group that grew up in the era of globalization and openness to cultural diversity (Tulung et al., 2019). However, despite being more open, millennial couples married to individuals from different cultures still face communication challenges that can trigger domestic conflicts.

When two individuals with different cultures build a family, they bring unique values, norms, and habits that may differ significantly (Budyanto et al., 2022). These differences often become sources of misunderstanding, especially in decision-making, parenting, and emotional expression. Therefore, cultural understanding in the context of family communication is a vital factor in resolving conflicts and maintaining balance in domestic relationships (Halim et al., 2024).

Based on a report from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), in 2023 there were 408,347 divorce cases in Indonesia, with more than 61% caused by disputes and quarrels arising from differences in communication patterns (Muhamad, 2023). This indicates that

misunderstandings in communication, particularly in cross-cultural marriages, can increase the risk of household conflict.

A study by Budyanto et al. (2022) found that couples with cultural differences are more prone to misunderstandings, especially when adjusting family expectations and values inherited from their respective cultures. Meanwhile, other research shows that effective communication and proper conflict resolution strategies can help couples manage these challenges.

To address conflicts among intercultural couples, one relevant perspective is derived from *family communication theory*, specifically the *face-negotiation theory* developed by Stella Ting-Toomey in 1985 and refined in 2005. *Face-negotiation theory* focuses on how individuals from different cultural backgrounds manage conflict and maintain harmony. In this study, the theory is used to analyze how married couples maintain face during communication, particularly when handling conflicts caused by cultural differences (Cangara, 2023).

There are two approaches within this theory: the dispositional (cultural) approach, which assumes that individuals have dominant tendencies in handling cultural conflicts, and the situational approach, which emphasizes that the issues and situations surrounding a conflict are crucial in determining the appropriate conflict resolution style. Ting-Toomey identified three core orientations of *face-negotiation* competence—knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction skills (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). This study focuses on the orientation of communication skills as the central aspect in examining how millennial married couples from different cultures communicate effectively.

Previous research, such as “*Communication in Interfaith and Multiethnic-Racial Families: Navigating Identity and Difference in Family Relationships*”, emphasized that open communication and respect for cultural diversity are key factors in maintaining harmony in multicultural families (Warner Colaner et al., 2023). Another study, “*Conformity of Javanese Cultural Values in Early Marriage: Case Study of Farmer Family Communication*”, found that in Javanese families, upheld cultural values significantly influence communication patterns and household decision-making (Puspitasari et al., 2019). Similarly, “*Culture Shock in Intercultural Marriages*” states that couples from different cultural backgrounds often face communication challenges that can lead to marital dissatisfaction if not properly managed (Sa’adah & Widiastuti, 2023).

However, research specifically examining how millennial couples understand their partner’s culture and apply communication strategies to resolve conflicts remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of millennial married couples in building communication and resolving conflicts in cross-cultural marriages.

This research has broad implications, both academically and practically. Academically, it contributes to family communication studies by investigating how millennial couples manage cultural differences in their households. Using a phenomenological approach, this study provides in-depth insights into couples’ experiences in managing conflict and fostering domestic harmony through cultural understanding.

Practically, the study’s results can serve as a guideline for couples in cross-cultural marriages to manage cultural differences and enhance communication skills. Additionally, these findings can be utilized by marriage counsellors, psychologists, and family-strengthening practitioners to help couples develop more effective communication strategies.

Thus, this research not only contributes academically but also has a tangible impact on improving the quality of communication and conflict resolution among millennial married couples from diverse cultural backgrounds.

METHOD

The researcher involved 10 informants—married couples from different cultural backgrounds (different tribes), aged 29–40 years (millennial generation), with at least a high school education. Informants were identified by the first three letters of their names. The study used a qualitative phenomenological approach. Researchers played a central role throughout the research process (Satia Rahmawati et al., 2024).

Data were analyzed following Miles and Huberman’s approach, focusing on reduction, data display, and verification (Supratman, 2023). The analysis included ongoing reflection, analytical questioning, and note-taking. The reduction stage involved selecting data relevant to the research objectives, primarily interview transcripts. In the display stage, researchers categorized data according to research aspects, such as communication skills in conflict resolution and adaptation, as well as skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships. The display results consisted of key interview excerpts presented in the findings. The conclusion stage involved drawing keywords from the displayed data, emphasizing frequently or prominently expressed statements aligned with research objectives. These keywords formed the basis for further discussion and analysis (Satia Rahmawati et al., 2024). Atlas.ti version 12 facilitated data processing.

Data collection included interviews and observations. Interviews provided primary data from ten informants (five couples) and explored aspects related to communication skills in conflict resolution, adaptation, and relationship-building. Observations supplemented the interviews, confirming and enriching the findings. Secondary data from literature reviews of previous research articles supported the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Skills in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation

The theme of the first communication skills orientation is skills in conflict resolution and adaptation. In the context of marriage between married couples of the millennial generation who come from different cultural backgrounds, skills in conflict resolution and adaptation are crucial aspects in maintaining harmony in the relationship. Couples with cultural differences often face unique challenges in communicating and interacting, which can affect the quality of their relationships. The categories of skills in conflict resolution and adaptation are found in table 1.

Table 1. Results of Skill Thematization in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation

Category	Theme
Skills to Manage Conflict Patiently and Effectively	Skills in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation
Skills to Adapt to Differences	

(Source: Processed by the author using Atlas.ti V.12, 2025)

From table 1, it can be described that in the theme of skills in conflict resolution and adaptation, there are 2 categories. The first is the category “Skills to Manage Conflict Patiently and Effectively” reflecting the importance of patience and effectiveness in resolving conflicts that arise due to cultural differences. By understanding the sources of conflict and developing skills in conflict resolution, couples can maintain the harmony of their relationship. The second is the category, “Skills to Adapt to Differences” shows the importance of the ability to adjust to a partner’s cultural differences. This ability allows couples to appreciate and understand each other’s cultural backgrounds, which is essential in building a healthy and harmonious relationship. The following are the results of the categorization of the theme “Skills in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation” listed in table 2 and figure 1.

Table 2. Skills in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation Theme

Code	Category
Empathy and Emotion Control Skills	Skills to Manage Conflict Patiently and Effectively
Giving space in times of conflict	
An Unemotional Approach	
Compromise and Adaptation	Skills to Adapt to Differences
Explaining one’s own culture to be accepted	

(Source: Processed by the author using Atlas.ti V.12, 2025)

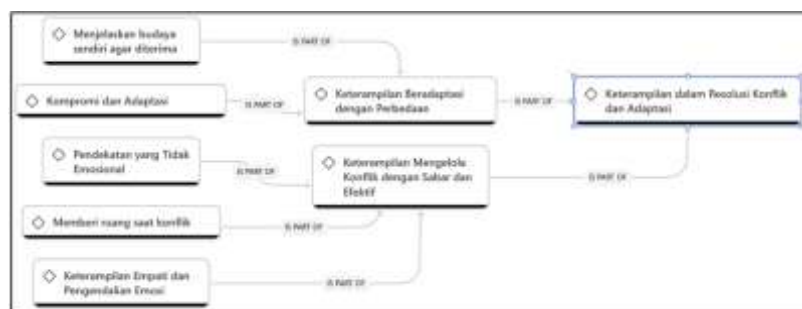


Figure 1. Networking Skills in Conflict Resolution and Adaptation

(Source: Processed by the author using Atlas.ti V.12, 2025)

In the table and picture above, it can be described that, in the discussion of marriage between married couples who come from different cultural backgrounds, interaction skills in managing conflicts are very important to maintain harmony in the relationship. These skills help couples deal with differences that may arise during interactions, both in communication and in the way they manage differences in values and habits. The codes, which fall under the categories of “Skills to Manage Conflict Patiently and Effectively” and “Skills to Adapt to Differences”, reflect approaches that focus on how couples can respond to conflict in a constructive, patient, and adaptive way.

The first category, “Skills to Manage Conflict Patiently and Effectively,” Iles codes such as “Empathy and Emotion Control Skills,” “Making room for conflict,” and “An Unemotional Approach.” When couples from different cultural backgrounds face tension or disagreement, they often need to regulate their emotions so as not to make the situation worse. In many cases, cultural differences can affect the way people respond to conflict, for example in the way they express their feelings or how they respond to tension. Empathy skills play an

important role in helping couples understand each other's feelings and giving each other space to respond calmly. Thus, this category suggests that effective conflict management skills involve self-management of emotions and empathy towards partners.

The "Make room for conflict" code is Important because it gives couples a chance to reflect or reduce the intensity of emotions before continuing the discussion. This gives time to respond to conflicts more wisely and prevent escalation. Then, the "Unemotional Approach" directs the couple to avoid emotional reactions that could make the situation worse. Instead, they are encouraged to communicate calmly, maintain emotional control, and avoid words or actions that can add tension in the relationship. Research shows that calmness in conflict helps couples to be more effective in resolving problems without letting emotions dominate the situation (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

Furthermore, the category "Coping Skills" describes the couple's ability to compromise and adapt to the cultural differences that exist in their relationship. The codes of "Compromise and Adaptation" and "Explaining one's own culture to be accepted" reflect important aspects of overcoming tensions arising from differences in views, values, or habits. In intercultural relationships, these differences can be a source of tension, but with adaptability skills, couples can manage these differences to create harmony.

The "Compromise and Adaptation" code illustrates the importance of both parties being willing to make adjustments in order to maintain balance in the relationship. Compromise allows couples to find mutually beneficial solutions for both parties, while adaptation requires them to be open to differences and find new ways to interact that respect each other's backgrounds. In this context, adapting to cultural differences means understanding and accepting different ways of communicating and responding to situations. Research from Guo (2025) shows that couples who are able to adapt their communication style based on their partner's culture are more likely to experience more harmonious relationships and fewer conflicts (Guo, 2025).

The code "Explaining one's own culture to be accepted" shows the importance of communication in explaining the cultural background to your partner. This helps couples to better understand each other's perspectives and reduces the chances of misunderstandings that could exacerbate conflict. In many cases, couples who come from very different cultures may find it difficult to understand the customs or values held by their partner. By explaining their own culture, couples can build a deeper understanding and reduce potential conflicts resulting from ignorance or prejudice.

Based on the networking diagram of figure 4.6, this study identifies key skills in conflict resolution and adaptation which are divided into two main categories. The first category is "Empathy and Emotion Control Skills," which includes the ability to make room for conflict, use an unemotional approach, and compromise and adapt. This skill demonstrates the importance of self-control in conflict situations, where individuals are able to resist impulsive reactions and seek more rational and effective solutions. These skills not only support the achievement of a satisfactory resolution for all parties involved, but also reduce the negative impact that often arises from the escalation of emotions in conflict.

The second category, "Coping Skills," focuses on the ability to explain one's own culture in order to be acceptable to others. These skills are especially important in the context of globalization and cultural diversity, where differences in backgrounds are often a source of

tension. With the ability to communicate cultural identities effectively, individuals can facilitate better skills between different groups and create a more inclusive and harmonious environment. This underscores the importance of cross-cultural communication skills in creating successful adaptations in a multicultural environment.

Intercultural marriage in the millennial generation presents complex communication challenges, but they can be overcome through effective adaptation strategies. Empirical studies show that communication barriers that arise due to cultural differences can be minimized with couples' cultural learning and systematic self-adjustment. The ability to adjust communication styles is a key factor in building harmonious interactions, as each individual brings a communication pattern that is influenced by their cultural norms.

Communication adaptation involves compromise and negotiation of meaning in everyday interactions, allowing couples to achieve common skills. Awareness of power dynamics in communication and respect for the cultural expression of couples are crucial elements in maintaining a balance in the relationship. With openness and mutual respect, couples can develop more inclusive communication patterns, so that the challenges of intercultural communication can not only be overcome, but also trigger relational growth and the enrichment of cultural perspectives in marriage. The results of the study on this point confirm that in general, each couple shows the ability to adapt through compromise and adjustment to the couple's culture. One of the strategies carried out is to explain the culture of each so that it can be accepted by each other.

In the concept of family communication, research from Ramadhana et al (2019) revealed that family communication has a great influence on family resilience both physically and mentally (40%) (Ramadhana et al., 2019). With good communication between married couples, it will bring a situation that protects each other, showing that the family must be a safe, comfortable, and calm place for all its members. Another Ramadhana research that takes the concept of family communication also explains that if family members are adaptive (in the concept of conformity), then family members will have the ability to adapt and conflict resolution can be more complex (Pabundu & Ramadhana, 2023). This approach allows couples to understand differences more openly, reduce misunderstandings, and build mutual respect. In addition, it is also in line with the theory of the millennial generation which explains that this generation tends to adopt an unemotional approach in dealing with conflict (Tulung et al., 2019), by providing space for couples when tension occurs.

Empathy skills and emotional control are key aspects in conflict resolution. This shows that millennial couples prefer understanding-based communication over direct confrontation, in line with the principles of Face Negotiation Theory (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003), where they try to maintain their partner's self-esteem while maintaining harmony in the relationship.

With these skills, millennial married couples with different cultures can navigate differences more effectively, avoid escalating conflicts, and build more stable and harmonious relationships. Adaptation and flexible communication are the main keys in maintaining a balance in relationships in the midst of existing cultural diversity.

Communication Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships

The theme of the second communication skills orientation is communication skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships. In the context of marriage between married

couples of the millennial generation who come from different cultural backgrounds, communication skills in building relationships and empathy are the key to maintaining harmony in the relationship. Couples with cultural differences often face unique challenges in communicating and interacting, which can affect the quality of their relationships. The categories of communication skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships are found in table 3.

Table 3. Results of Thematization of Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships

Category	Theme
Open Communication Skills and Adapting Communication Style	Communication Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships
Skills To Be A Good Listener	
Skills in Showing Affection and Support	
Empathy and Emotion Control Skills	

(Source: Processed by the author using Atlas.ti V.12, 2025)

From table 3, it can be described that in the theme of communication skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships, there are four categories, including: Open Communication Skills and Adjusting Communication Styles, Skills to Be Good Listeners, Skills in Showing Affection and Support, Empathy Skills and Emotional Control. All of these categories are certainly very relevant to the communication skills carried out by married couples of the millennial generation who are culturally different in maintaining family harmony in the midst of differences. The following are the results of the categorization of the theme “communication skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships” listed in figure 2.

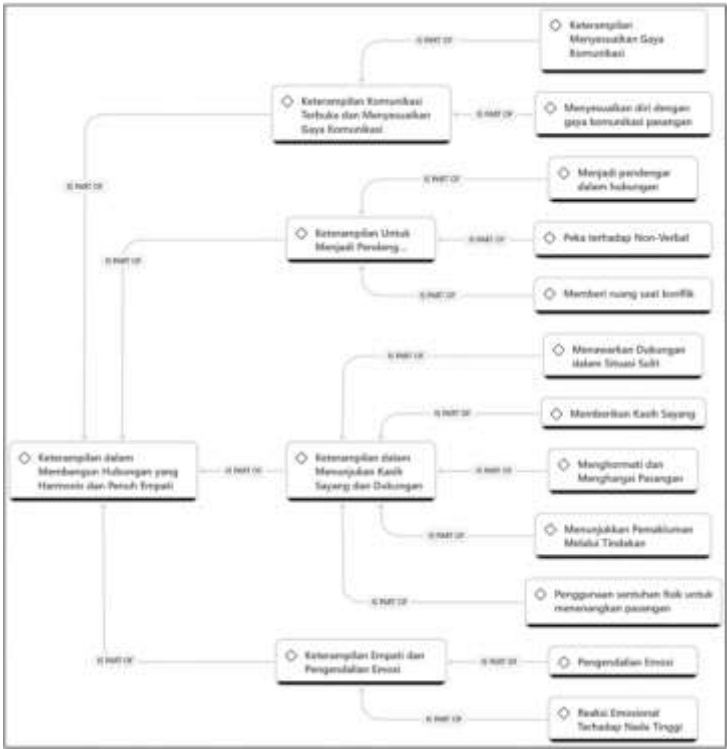


Figure 2. Networking Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships

(Source: Prepared by the author using Atlas.ti V.12, 2025)

In the picture above, it can be illustrated that the category “Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships” focuses on the importance of couples’ ability to foster healthy, mutually understanding, and deep relationships. In relationships between couples who come from different cultures, skills in communicating, listening, providing emotional support, and showing affection play a crucial role. This skill not only creates a harmonious relationship, but it also helps build a sense of mutual respect and respect between couples.

The first code in this category, “Open Communication Skills and Adjusting Communication Styles,” reflects the importance of talking to each other clearly and openly. Especially in intercultural relations, mutual openness in communication is needed to avoid misunderstandings that can arise due to differences in cultural backgrounds. Couples need to have the ability to adjust their communication style according to each other’s needs, so that they can interact more smoothly and effectively. Research by Liu et al. (2024) shows that openness in communication between multicultural couples can minimize the potential for conflict and increase satisfaction in relationships (Liu et al., 2024).

Furthermore, “Skills To Be A Good Listener” are essential in a harmonious relationship. Being a good listener means having the skill of giving full attention to what your partner is saying without rushing to give a response or opinion. This creates a sense of belonging and understanding, which is crucial in building trust and closeness. This skill becomes more challenging when couples come from different cultures, as they may have different ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. A study by Marella & Caropeboka (2022) revealed that couples who are used to active listening tend to have stronger relationships, especially in situations of conflict or tension (Marellia & Caropeboka, 2022).

“Skills in Showing Affection and Support” is also an important element in building a harmonious relationship. Affection and emotional support help couples feel valued and secure in their relationship. In the context of couples who have cultural differences, it is important to understand how that affection and support are expressed by couples who come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, some cultures prefer to express affection through actions, while others prefer words or physical touch. Research by Shabila & Supratman (2023) shows that showing affection in a way that is understood by couples is helpful in strengthening emotional bonds and increasing relationship satisfaction (Shabila & Supratman, 2023).

The skill of “Empathy and Emotional Control” Is key In creating harmonious relationships, especially in the face of differences. Couples who have empathy can better understand their partner’s perspective, which can reduce tension or conflict. Emotional control also plays an important role, as it can avoid overreactions or words that can hurt your partner. In intercultural relationships, empathy helps couples understand the different ways of communicating and respect the emotional needs of the couple that may differ from their own. Nuzuli & Sunata (2022) examined that couples who are able to manage their emotions and empathize with their partners are more likely to have harmonious and loving relationships (Nuzuli & Sunata, 2022).

In the context of “Skills in Building Harmonious and Empathetic Relationships”, the codes mentioned describe the specific skills that couples need to maintain healthy,

understanding, and supportive relationships. An explanation of how these codes form the relevant categories can be explained as follows:

Communication Style Adjustment Skills are part of the ability to adapt to the way a partner communicates. Each individual has a different communication style, which is influenced by cultural factors, background, and life experiences. In relationships between couples, it is very important to adjust to the couple's communication style so that the interaction remains smooth and effective. It also leads to "Open Communication Skills and Adjusting Communication Styles," which facilitates clear and transparent communication. Research by Ramadhana et al (2021) emphasizes that adaptive communication skills assist families in reducing misunderstandings and strengthening their emotional bonds (Ramadhana et al., 2019).

Adjusting to a partner's communication style includes the ability to understand and respond in a way that fits the partner's communication style, whether it's direct, indirect, verbal, or non-verbal. This shows how important proficiency and flexibility are in relationships, where couples who can fit in are more likely to have a more harmonious relationship. These skills affect the quality of communication and support the achievement of more positive relationship goals. Being a good listener is part of this skill, as by actively listening, couples can avoid misunderstandings and create space for more open communication. Active listening plays an important role in building emotional closeness.

Non-Verbal Sensitivity refers to the ability to capture emotional or communication signals that are not conveyed directly with words. In relationships, skills with facial expressions, body language, and intonation of a partner's voice can reduce conflict and increase empathy. This is part of "Empathy and Emotion Control Skills" because when couples can recognize each other's feelings through non-verbal cues, they can respond in a more responsive and supportive way. Nadika et al (2022) found that couples who are sensitive to non-verbal cues tend to have healthier and more harmonious relationships (Nadika et al., 2022).

On the other hand, Giving space during conflict is part of wise conflict management skills, where giving couples space to calm down can avoid escalating tensions. Resolving conflicts patiently and avoiding aggressive communication demonstrates "Skills of Managing Conflict Patiently and Effectively", which is crucial in maintaining a stable relationship. Offering support in difficult situations or "Skills in Showing Compassion and Support" is an important response in conflict situations. Khairiyyah and Rina (2024) suggest that emotional support from couples can speed up the recovery process from stress and conflict in family relationships (Khairiyyah & Rina, 2024). The affection shown in the act of supporting the couple in times of difficulty strengthens the emotional bond between the two.

Furthermore, Giving Affection in a relationship leads to tangible actions that show behavior and appreciation for the partner. This includes giving physical touch, affirmative words, and small actions that show that couples care about each other. Respecting and Appreciating Partners is part of supporting each other's personal and emotional development, as well as respecting each other's needs. Research by Shabila and Supratman (2023) shows that the rewards given by couples directly contribute to satisfaction in their relationships (Shabila & Supratman, 2023).

Empathy and Emotional Control skills are crucial in maintaining a harmonious relationship. Couples who can manage their emotions well, especially in stressful situations, can maintain calm in communicating and avoid unproductive confrontations. Emotional

control allows couples to remain rational in resolving conflicts and avoid the tendency to react impulsively or excessively. Emotional Reactions to High Pitches are also an important indicator in managing communication with your partner; Couples who are not easily offended by high tones or verbal confrontations can reduce the potential for greater conflict.

Based on the networking diagram in Figure 4.7, this study categorizes various skills that are important in communication and interpersonal relationships, which are divided into several interrelated categories. The first category is “Communication Style Adjustment Skills,” which involves the ability to adjust to a partner’s communication style and be a good listener in relationships. This skill emphasizes the importance of flexibility in communicating, where individuals can adapt their way of communicating according to the needs and characteristics of the interlocutor. In addition, being a good listener is also important in creating a respectful relationship, where individuals are able to understand and respond with empathy to what the partner is saying.

The second category, which is “Skills in Showing Affection and Support,” includes different ways to show passion and support in a relationship, such as giving affection, respect and appreciation for your partner. In addition, the use of physical touch to calm the partner is also included in this skill, which suggests that passionate physical interaction can strengthen emotional bonds in relationships. These skills are essential in creating a sense of security and value in the relationship, which in turn can strengthen the emotional closeness between the couple.

Finally, the category “Empathy and Emotion Control Skills” includes the ability to manage emotions well in stressful or conflicting situations. This emotion control includes the ability to respond calmly to high notes or situations that trigger an emotional reaction. This skill is essential in maintaining effective and harmonious communication, even in difficult emotional conditions. By managing emotional reactions, individuals can prevent the escalation of conflict and keep relationships stable and constructive. Overall, these skills complement each other in building healthy and deep communication, which underlies successful interpersonal relationships.

Skills in building harmonious and empathetic relationships are essential for couples to maintain healthy and deep communication. One of the key skills is the ability to adapt the communication style with your partner. Each individual brings a communication pattern that is influenced by cultural background and life experiences, so adapting to the couple’s communication style is crucial in avoiding misunderstandings. Open, clear, and flexible communication will strengthen the emotional bond between couples and create more harmonious interactions (Nadika et al., 2022).

The skill of managing conflicts patiently is also an important element in maintaining relationship stability. Giving space for your partner when facing conflict, as well as avoiding aggressive communication, can avoid escalating tensions. Showing compassion and support in difficult situations strengthens emotional bonds and speeds recovery from stress.

Appreciation of your partner through concrete actions such as physical touch or affirmative words also contributes to the success of the relationship. This skill allows couples to feel valued and cared for, creating a sense of security in their relationship. Maintaining effective and harmonious communication in stressful emotional situations requires the ability to manage emotional reactions well. Overall, the skills of adjusting communication styles,

showing affection and support, and empathy and emotional control are key to building stable and deep relationships.

The millennial generation has different communication characteristics compared to previous generations. They prioritize technology-based communication, more open self-expression, and tend to seek equal relationships and mutual respect (Zis et al., 2021). The results of this study confirm that the millennial generation in romantic relationships prioritizes open communication and empathy in building healthy relationships.

One of the important characteristics found in this study is the importance of sensitive skills to non-verbal communication, such as understanding facial expressions, body language, and the intonation of a partner's voice. This is especially relevant in the millennial generation, who often communicate through digital media, where proficiency in the non-verbal aspects of face-to-face communication is becoming increasingly crucial. In addition, the ability to manage conflicts patiently is also a hallmark of communication in the millennial generation. This generation is more likely to avoid direct confrontation and prefer conflict resolution methods based on open discussion and compromise. The study found that couples who can make room for each other during conflict are better able to avoid escalating tensions and maintain relationship stability. In his book entitled "Conflict Management (An Approach to Communication and Education Psychology", Weni (2018) emphasized that providing space during conflict not only helps couples in regulating their emotions but also creates healthier communication conditions in the long term (Weni, 2018).

Face Negotiation Theory explains how individuals from different cultural backgrounds manage conflict and maintain their self-image (face) in interpersonal communication (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). This theory is relevant in understanding how couples adjust their communication to maintain a balance between personal needs and partner needs.

In the context of this study, it was found that the skills in showing affection and support are very closely related to the concepts of face-saving and face-giving. Face-saving refers to an individual's efforts to protect their self-esteem during interactions, especially in conflict situations. For example, a partner who gives his or her partner space during a conflict not only avoids direct confrontation but also gives the partner the opportunity to salvage his or her self-esteem, which ultimately contributes to a healthier relationship.

In contrast, face-giving refers to a person's actions to support and enhance their partner's self-esteem through empathetic communication. Giving appreciation and affection in the form of affirmative words, physical touch, and tangible actions such as giving special treatment to your partner is a form of face-giving that strengthens emotional bonds in the relationship. Liu et al (2024) mentioned that rewards given in partner interactions significantly increase relationship satisfaction and create a sense of security in communication (Liu et al., 2024).

In addition, emotional control in conflict situations is also related to face-negotiation strategies used by couples. Individuals who are able to respond to conflict calmly and avoid escalation through a high tone of voice show better face-management skills. Good emotional control not only helps couples to stay rational in discussions but also allows them to navigate conflict in a more constructive way and not damage the relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that effective communication was crucial for maintaining harmony among millennial couples from different cultural backgrounds. Couples who adapted their communication styles, applied negotiation strategies, and prioritized empathy and openness tended to achieve greater relationship satisfaction. Grounded in Face Negotiation Theory, the findings illustrated how couples balanced self-image and communication adaptation to sustain relationship stability. Non-verbal cues, emotional regulation, and active listening further strengthened harmony and prevented conflict escalation. The study contributed academically by deepening understanding of cross-cultural marital communication and offered practical value for couples and 12848ounselors alike. Future research could explore how digital communication platforms influence conflict resolution and emotional expression in intercultural marriages.

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