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***POTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION IN THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS AT
PT MUTIARA AGAM: NIAS AND MINANG ETHNIC***

**PROBLEM POTENSIAL KOMUNIKASI ANTARBUDAYA
DALAM PROSES AKULTURASI DI PT MUTIARA AGAM:
ETNIS NIAS DAN MINANG**

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ABSTRACT

Komunikasi antarbudaya menyiratkan dua budaya yang bertemu sering terjadi prasangka karena bahasa yang berbeda. Dengan demikian, kedua etnis berakulturasi sehingga mencapai pola komunikasi yang sama. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan mengenai problem potensial komunikasi antarbudaya di PT Mutiara Agam. Pendekatan tulisan ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dari teori problem potensial Larry A. Samovar. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dimulai dari data reduction (reduksi data), data display (penyajian data), dan conclulusin drawing/verification (penarikan kesimpulan atau verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi antarbudaya di PT Mutiara Agam menghadapi tantangan akibat kesenjangan antara pekerja etnis Nias dan Minang. Stereotip



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negatif, keterbatasan keterampilan komunikasi, sikap menghindari ketidakpastian, prasangka, kecenderungan menarik diri dari interaksi sosial, serta dominasi dan etnosentrisme turut memperumit hubungan. Meski demikian, upaya akulturasi tetap dilakukan melalui penggunaan bahasa yang fleksibel, kegiatan buru babi sebagai ajang adaptasi budaya, serta penyesuaian kuliner, meski etnis Nias cenderung mempertahankan kebiasaan makan babi. Dengan memberikan pemahaman mendalam tentang dinamika komunikasi antarbudaya dan strategi adaptasi serta integrasi, tulisan ini berkontribusi dalam memperluas wawasan mengenai tantangan dan peluang dalam mencapai keselarasan dan harmoni di lingkungan kerja yang beragam secara budaya. Kontribusi ini sangat berharga bagi perusahaan, praktisi, dan peneliti yang bergerak dalam bidang komunikasi antarbudaya dan manajemen sumber daya manusia.

Keywords: Etnis Minang; Etnis Nias; Komunikasi Antarbudaya; Problem Potensial

ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication implies two cultures that meet often experience prejudice due to different languages. This way, the two ethnic groups acculturate to achieve the same communication patterns. This research aims to describe the potential intercultural communication problems at PT Mutiara Agam. This study uses a qualitative method with Larry A. Samovar's potential problem theory as the approach. Data collection techniques include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis starts with data reduction, data display (data presentation), and conclusion drawing/verification. The research results show that intercultural communication at PT Mutiara Agam faced challenges due to the gap between Nias and Minang ethnic workers. Negative stereotypes, limited communication skills, attitudes of avoiding uncertainty, prejudice, and the tendency to withdraw from social interaction, as well as domination and ethnocentrism also complicated relationships. However, acculturation efforts were still carried out through flexible use of language, pig hunting activities as a means of cultural adaptation, and culinary adjustments, even though the Nias ethnic group tended to maintain the habit of eating pork. By providing an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of intercultural communication and adaptation and integration strategies, this article expands insight into the challenges and opportunities in achieving harmony in a culturally diverse work environment. This contribution is valuable for companies, practitioners, and researchers engaged in intercultural communication and human resource management.

Keywords: Minang Ethnicity; Intercultural Communication; Nias Ethnicity; Potential Problems

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication is an inevitable key in various aspects of life. This phenomenon requires understanding, appreciating and adapting to the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia. Intercultural

communication is not simply the exchange of words or information; it involves a deep understanding of the norms, values, and ways of thinking that differ between cultural groups (Baldwin et al. 2023).

For every human being, whether as an individual or a society with a different cultural background, it is not surprising that there is often dissonance with others, both individually and in groups. For example, in behaviour, speech, the language used, the values adhered to, how one looks, dresses and so on. As said by a cultural communication expert, namely Samovar and Porter, intercultural relations are significant for understanding intercultural and cross-cultural communication because they influence people's culture to learn communication (LA Lubis 2014).

The process of cultural acculturation occurs when several cultures interact intensively over a long period, and then each of these cultures adapts to each other to become one culture (Ward and Szabó 2023). It can be seen in language, religion and belief, social organisation, society, knowledge systems, arts and building forms in acculturation and cultural contact. The reality of ethnic Nias workers migrating to Tiku village due to economic factors shows that cultural interactions have occurred by themselves, and naturally, these interactions without significant events occurring. This fact is because the Nias ethnic community, apart from bringing their families to Tiku, there are also Nias ethnic groups who take Minang ethnic women as wives.

Intercultural communication is ordinary communication. The only difference is the different cultural background of the person carrying out the communication process. Cultural aspects such as language,

non-verbal signals, attitudes, beliefs, character, and value orientation of the mind will be more often found as significant differences that usually cause distortions in communication. There will still be shared interests in communication and social interaction (Mehriniso and Siddiqova 2023). Communication science, if applied correctly, will be able to prevent conflicts between individuals, between groups, between tribes, between nations and between races. Fostering the unity and unity of humanity inhabiting the earth (Sarvinozkhon 2023).

Understanding the culture of other people is very important in building effective communication. This means that humans' understanding and acceptance of the culture of other communities with different cultures is the basis for building effective communication. This is where intercultural communication has a huge role (Moon 2023).

Based on the results of interviews with the Nagari Tiku traditional leader, initially, the Nias ethnic community migrated from their native area in the Nias Islands to the Tiku area because of the availability of job opportunities as labourers in oil palm plantations. They migrated after the establishment of the PT Mutiara Agam company, which produces palm oil, in 1982, and in the 3rd year after the company was established, it became the first wave of movement of the Nias community and continues to this day.

The culture of each ethnic group is different from other ethnic groups. One of them is the difference between the Nias and

Minangkabau ethnic cultures. When an ethnic group enters another ethnic territory, the entering ethnic group will try to establish intercultural communication with the local community. Minangkabau, which is famous for its strong cultural and religious traditions, finds it very difficult to accept ethnicities with different religions, even though the Nias ethnic group is provided with housing by a company that works as palm oil workers at PT Mutiara Agam; these ethnic groups do not interact too much with each other. Meanwhile, those who work outside PT Mutiara Agam (farming and farming) only live in simple huts. Because PT Mutiara Agam is located in Tiku, it must comply with the rules set by the Nagari; the proof is that PT does not provide a place of worship in the housing where the Nias ethnic group lives, but the PT facilitates the Nias ethnic group to worship by bus to Padang City. Not only that, the Minangkabau people think that if the Nias ethnic group is pitied, they will destroy Nagari because the ethnic group living in Nagari gamble, drink and eat pork.

Even though the Nias ethnic group has lived in Nagari for a long time, the presence of Nias is not very influential in Tiku society. The proof is, based on the link *mamak* rules in the Nagari Traditional Council, Nias ethnic groups who come to Nagari are not allowed to own land and houses permanently and are not even allowed to build a church as a place of worship. If they want to own land and a permanent home, they must fulfil the conditions set, namely being Muslim, understanding Minangkabau customs and

obeying Nagari customary rules. Even so, they persist in living and living among the people of Nagari Tiku and try to be able to communicate with different cultural backgrounds and maintain the culture they were born with from their area of origin.

Several previous studies have studied intercultural communication problems. For example, in research conducted on Intercultural Communication between Makassar Bugis Ethnic and Chinese Ethnic at Bacan Market Makassar (Dayyana 2021). This indicates that some of that is a factor that supports the obstacles between ethnic Chinese and Bugis ethnic Makassar in communicating Bacan Market. Then, in research conducted by Idris Sodikin (Sodikin 2020) Shows the values of intercultural communication contained in it so that Oi Bura Village can live side by side and in harmony amid multicultural and multi-ethnic society. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Yunidia Tebe 2020) It contains how international students must adapt to Medan State University's environment and interact with local culture.

Several previous studies on potential intercultural communication problems (Dayyana, 2021; Sodikin, 2020; and Yunidia Tebe, 2020) focused more on the competency results, inhibiting factors, and intercultural communication competencies of each informant from both ethnic groups. In general, the acculturation process in communities with different cultures in various regions of Indonesia still faces barriers to intercultural communication. However, no one has yet

collaborated on the stages of the intercultural communication process when faced with two cultures until they reach the same communication pattern.

Based on this background, this research aims to identify *potential problems in intercultural communication for Nias and Minangkabau workers at PT Mutiara Agam*. This research will look at how the communication process between cultures with different customs and cultures carries out communication to achieve effective communication between ethnic groups, understand each other's aspects of the interaction process, avoid misunderstandings in interpreting messages to avoid inter-ethnic conflict and overcome things that trigger conflict in interactions. This process involves adjustment without engineering and coercion, resulting in an acculturation process. By carrying out this research, it is hoped that it can become good literature in understanding and accepting the culture of other communities with different cultures as a basis for building effective communication.

2. Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative descriptive study with a field research approach, namely research that is directly carried out in the field or on respondents to obtain information regarding problems in intercultural communication in the acculturation process at PT Mutiara Agam between the Nias and Minangkabau ethnic groups in a comprehensive manner (Romlah

2021). This data was collected through observation, documentation and in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview techniques.

A purposive sampling technique is used to determine informants. *Purposive sampling* is a data source sampling technique based on specific considerations related to the research case study and objectives (Sugiyono 2016).

This research directly involves workers from the Nias and Minang ethnic groups, PT officials, and local traditional officials as research objects. The criteria for informants in this research are, first, HRD and traditional officials because they play a role as policymakers at PT Mutiara Agam and Nagari Tiku. Secondly, Nias and Minang workers carry out the intercultural communication process at PT Mutiara Agam.

The data obtained will be analysed qualitatively and described in descriptive form based on a process consisting of three activity streams simultaneously, namely data reduction, data display (data presentation), and conclusion drawing/verification (drawing conclusions or verification) (Sugiyono 2018).

Table 1. Research Informant

Employee Name	Work
Journalist	assistant manager
Rifki	HRD
Mikin	Nias workers
Siska	Nias workers
Mikin	Nias workers
Anthony	Minang Palm Oil Workers
Jusnawilis	Minang workers
Agus	Minang workers

Ali	PT security guard
Santi	Rice Seller

The data used in the research is data obtained from interviews and documentation. In this research, the truth of the interview results will be tested by looking at the documentation obtained from related sources.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Nias Ethnic Workers at PT Mutiara Agama: Potential Problems of Intercultural Communication

Nias ethnic workers are a substantial minority in terms of their numbers. The communication between the Nias and Minangkabau ethnic groups does not create complicated difficulties. The reason is that they both learn to understand the character and customs of other people whose views differ from theirs. However, this does not rule out the possibility that there will be suspicious thoughts and prejudices that will give rise to conflict between ethnic Nias workers and ethnic Minangkabau workers at PT Mutiara Agam. The Nias ethnic group came to Tiku village starting in 1985 AD. PT Mutiara Agam brought in the influx of Nias ethnic groups as workers on the company's land. Nias ethnic workers who live in Tiku village live according to their work. Nias, who works as a worker at PT Mutiara Agam, will be facilitated to live in housing provided by the company. They live in this housing for free, including electricity, which the company covers. The Nias ethnic settlement pattern in Nagari Tiku generally follows the existing roads in PT

Mutiara Agam's oil palm plantations. Meanwhile, the Nias ethnic group, which works as cultivators, makes huts in their fields or on community land with free-riding status. Even though this no longer feels foreign to Minangkabau workers and the people of Tiku village, prejudice against the Nias ethnic group continues to grow among the Minangkabau ethnic group, making communication difficult. Moreover, interactions between entities are ineffective.



Figure 1. Nias Ethnic Worker Complex

Researchers found seven potential problems of intercultural communication among the Nias ethnic group from the interviews with Nias people that researchers conducted with Mrs Siska, the wife of Mr Faogogo, an employee of PT Mutiara Agam. It seems that the Nias ethnic group is stereotyped towards the Minang ethnic group. Siska's mother said, "*Orang minang itu tegas, mereka tidak suka bertele-tele dan cenderung mementingkan diri mereka, dan Mereka juga tidak terlalu sering berbagi makanan dengan kami.*" (Siska, Wife of PT Mutiara Agam Employee, interview, 17 May 2022)

The statement above explains that Minang workers still have group experiences regarding certain groups of people and use them as a guide in acting. They refer to the behavioural norms of a group of people, not individuals. However, stereotypes narrow a person's perception and can contaminate intercultural communication. This is because stereotypes tend to generalise the characteristics of a group of people. Stereotypes and prejudice are the leading causes of conflict. Social prejudice is the generalisation of values one group carries towards another group, even though only a tiny proportion of group members carry out the predicted behaviour. However, social prejudice is not always accurate because humans, as objects of prejudice, always change over time and circumstances. In contrast to static inanimate objects, the objects of human prejudice very rarely change (Icol Dianto 2019).

Intercultural communication barriers are faced by ethnic Minangkabau workers when they cannot communicate in Indonesian, as happens among palm oil harvesters who do not interact with other workers. To overcome this problem, improving their intercultural communication competence by increasing their understanding of Indonesian is necessary. Language is the key to building good relationships and achieving common goals because a person can control the environment and create mutual understanding through language. The more significant the difference

in language, the more difficult it is to understand.

From an interview with Mr Mikin, a permanent employee of the Nias ethnicity at PT Mutiara Agam,

“Hambatan yang dihadapi adalah keterbatasan komunikasi, khususnya jika memasuki daerah atau masyarakat dengan budaya dan bahasa tradisional tertentu. Disini kami berinteraksi menggunakan bahasa indonesia agar saya dan teman-teman dapat berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat maupun pekerja minang disini.” (Mikin, permanent employee of PT Mutiara Agam, interview, 15 May 2022).

The sense of uncertainty in inter-ethnic workers living in factory complexes must be reduced to survive and overcome uncertainty. Humans are social creatures. Interacting with others is one of the most essential things every human can do. However, for some people, excessive fear and anxiety are experienced when someone has to interact or be in the midst of a society with a different culture. The thought process is often part of the problem. Anxiety becomes a habit when you spend too much time having worrying and frightening thoughts, such as not being accepted in society.

From an interview with Mr. Lahoi, a permanent employee of PT Mutiara Agam.

“Karena kami pendatang kami pasti merasakan cemas karena setau saya orang Minang itu sangat sulit menerima budaya lain apalagi dengan agama yang berbeda. Tau lah di Sumatera barat ini tempat peribadatan untuk orang Non Muslim itu hanya ada di kota Padang sedangkan di kota dan kabupaten lain tidak diperbolehkan mendirikan peribadatan

selain masjid. Kami memegang prinsip ya... kalau kita baik di tempat orang pasti orang juga baik dengan kita asal tetap mengikuti dan tidak melanggar ketentuan adat disini saja” (Lahoi, permanent employee of PT Mutiara Agam, interview 15 May 2022).

From the statement above, it can be understood that when ethnic Nias workers moved and settled in a new environment, they experienced worry due to uncertainty motivated by limited information. These uncertainties include fear of not being able to blend in, not having friends, experiencing oppression by Minang natives, and worry about the system implemented by PT Mutiara Agam, which makes immigrants feel intimidated because of the strong Minangkabau customs and culture. The uncertainty experienced by Nias ethnic workers, seen from the perspective of reducing uncertainty, consists of cognitive and behavioural uncertainty. The cognitive uncertainty experienced by the Nias ethnic group is that they are not sure about the image of the new environment and other people's attitudes towards them in the PT Mutiara Agam environment. The results of the interview with Mr. Miki show that:

“Orang Minangkabau berwatak pelit, suka menang sendiri, mereka terkesan kasar dan tidak bertele-tele. Terlihat jika berbicara apa adanya mungkin terbentuk karena proses kehidupan yang dilalui membentuk pribadi yang tegas dan mereka lebih mementingkan keluarganya” (Miki, permanent employee of PT Mutiara Agam, interview 15 May 2022).

Meanwhile, high anxiety due to lack of self-confidence and concerns about not being accepted by other cultures causes communicators to feel anxious about interacting. Differences in cultural backgrounds, including differences in adopted norms, language, speaking styles, customs and habits, can cause problems or misunderstandings. Previous studies published in journals have discussed the finding that differences in cultural background are a factor that can give rise to misunderstandings. Research on *Intercultural Communication and Reception* reveals that language differences and non-verbal misunderstandings give rise to conflict. Apart from that, obstacles due to prejudice and stereotypes also tend to give rise to intercultural conflicts. Labeling a culture (G'aniyevna 2023).

Respect each other and not interfere with the interests of certain groups in any way, such as worship, work and so on. Help each other and be polite between ethnic groups. Increase cooperation and eliminate excessive prejudice against certain ethnicities or groups, and always be prejudiced towards other people and groups.

Researchers also found withdrawal behaviour among the Nias ethnic group. Withdrawal behaviour is an attempt to avoid interaction with other people and avoid relationships with other people, and people choose to withdraw from the environment for various reasons. However, this behaviour can have negative impacts if not addressed immediately. Whatever the reason, he

withdraws and then ends up being alone in an environment that does not accept his existence, being ostracised or *socially* bullied.

Based on the results of an interview with Mr Ali, a security guard at PT Mutiara Agam.

“Dikecek an mengasingkan diri indak lo doh , yo kalau di pabrik lai lah basapoan tapi sekedar lalu mode tu je nyo nan mangecek banyak yo indak do. Urang nieh ko yo inyo-inyo e nyo nan jo awak urang minang ndak terlalu bana dalam bergaul tu. Tapi nan rancak sosial e lain juo banyak kadang mode pak Nehe tu a nyo acok duduk di tampek satpam ko mah maota-ota” (Ali, Interview, 17 May 2022)

Translation :

"It is not said to be self-isolating if at the factory there are people who say hello, but that is all. These Nias people do not talk much, but they are very close to each other and do not socialise with Minang people. "But there are also good social ones like Mr Nehe who sometimes stop by the security guard post."

These interviews show that Nias workers are known to be closed and do not interact too much with the community around the factory. They do not isolate themselves or anything like that, but judging from the perspective of Minang workers, they like to withdraw from their environment.

The uniqueness of the Nias ethnicity has attracted the attention of researchers from various fields. Several studies focus `` on one element of Nias community life. A study conducted by Sarah and Dora explained that the Nias ethnic group upholds the honour and dignity of women. Even though women in Nias

have the dominant task of carrying out various family affairs, this does not mean that women should be treated arbitrarily. In contrast, women in Nias are very protected by strict customary rules. Protecting women is a measure of men's self-esteem (Sarah and Dora 2023) .

Research by Faofoli Harefa shows that the Nias ethnic group respects individuals with high status, even though they do not recognise a caste system. In Banuaha society, a social structure causes specific individuals or groups to be respected. In the novel Heavenly Man, three social groups are highly valued: those who practice customs, people from certain families or clans, and teachers. These three statuses have significant influence and are often feared. Apart from that, the people of Nias pay great attention to self-esteem and authority as benchmarks for social status. To achieve these two things, someone must hold a traditional party, which costs quite a bit (Sianturi, Tangkudung, and Harilama 2021) .

In her article entitled *Joints of the Nias Community*, Laiya highlights the Nias tribe as a community that maintains its local cultural values with deliberation and consensus as the main principles in resolving problems and making decisions, especially those related to survival and ethical violations according to norms and laws. Local customs. Decisions are left to elders or traditional stakeholders representing the community's voice. They also really appreciate the values of family and brotherhood in their traditions and have a unique habit of welcoming guests by providing

palm wine. However, some people consider this unethical (Laiya and Laiya 1975) .

Apart from that, several local traditions are part of the Nias culture. This was explained Telaumbanua in his article entitled *Millennials and Nias Culture: at the Crossroads*, that the people of Nias are not allergic to pluralistic life. Indeed, during its historical development, in the traditional social system, the terms "sowanua" (natives) and "ciriewu" (immigrants) were known. However, the system of openness to *alamewu* still exists. If *alatewu* declares itself as a member of the Banua community through traditional ceremonies, then *Suhuewu* becomes part of *the Banua*. Furthermore, the people of Nias are organised in a village called *Banua* (Telaumbanua 2019) .

The Nias ethnic group also has a strata system in leadership traditions and social society. The first strata were Balugu, Salawa (North et al.) or Si'ulu (South Nias), the powerful nobility. In South Nias, those who hold the reins of government are called Balö Zi'ulu. The second stratum is sato or sihönö, siwarawara, who are village residents. The third stratum is enslaved people, divided into three groups: Sondrara hare (enslaved people because they were unable to pay their debts), binu (enslaved people because they lost the war), and hölito (enslaved people who were redeemed from the death penalty by their masters). In the social stratification of the Nias, the basis and understanding are based on tribal religion (Zebua and Panjaitan 2022) .

On the other hand, similar research was also conducted by Suhaimi et al. regarding *communication patterns in overcoming conflicts between the Nias and Batak tribes of Tanjung Mas Kampar Kiri Village*. This study states that Nias people work in palm oil mills for their livelihood. Palm oil mills prefer to use the services of the Nias people because Nias people are less demanding and agile, and the wages given are not too high compared to using the services of the Batak people, so Batak people feel left behind and defeated in existing economic activities (Zatrahadi and Miftahuddin 2020) .

Socially, Nias people prefer to join with fellow Nias; they tend not to want to socialise, so they are less able to speak Indonesian; this results in them being unable to get along with other people. This is also a problem because of the lack of unity in language, so problems often occur because of the wrong language. Understanding in communicating, which is due to the low level of education of the Nias ethnic community (Ardi 2022). The social life of the Nias and Batak people often experiences problems caused by a lack of cultural understanding on both sides. It is difficult to adapt and often incompatible between these two ethnic groups, which makes it easy for conflicts to occur between them, coupled with feelings of suspicion and hatred, which make the relationship between the two increasingly disharmonious (MA Lubis 2021) .

3.2. Minang Ethnic Workers at PT Mutiara Agam: Potential Problems of Intercultural Communication

From the findings made during observations at PT Mutiara Agam, similar stereotypes were still found, aimed at Minang workers towards the Nias ethnic group. As in the form of the expression called Rang Nieh and in other forms, Minang people consider the Nias ethnic group to be descended from dogs. This saying describes many aspects, such as physical behaviour and character.

In an interview with Ante Santi, who sells rice at the Afdeling Alpha complex.

“Rang Nieh yang berasal dari keturunan anjing. Anggapan atau cap yang bersifat negatif ini berkembang dalam masyarakat Nagari Tiku sejak dari dulunya. Selain itu masyarakat menganggap bahwa Etnis Nias jika dikasihani, maka mereka akan leluasa. Misalnya orang Nias meminta buah semangka di kebun orang Minangkabau, jika sipemilik ladang membolehkan, maka besok atau hari selanjutnya orang Nias akan mengambil buah semangka itu dengan tanpa izin.” (Santi, interview, 17 May 2022)

People of Nagari Tiku consider that the Nias ethnic group is descended from dogs. One of the informants from the Minangkabau tribe gave this negative opinion, saying that once there was a princess (daughter of the king) who was already old but did not want to marry or look for a partner in South Tapanuli. The princess did not want to marry, so the king became ashamed of his people. Then, the princess was expelled from the royal realm. With a heavy heart leaving the kingdom, the king's daughter carried a male dog to the

uninhabited island of Nias. After years of living on Nias Island, the male dog mated with the king's daughter, so the king's daughter became pregnant and gave birth to a boy. After the child grew up, the mother sent him around the island to look for his wife. The mother gave a ring to her son by saying, "If the ring fits on the finger of the woman you meet later, then she is your future wife and marry her". After months, the boy travelled around the island and did not meet the woman he was looking for, so he was good to go home. Halfway through the journey, the boy met a woman and gave her a ring he was carrying on her finger. It turned out that the ring fit on the woman's finger, and then they got married. It turned out that the woman was his biological mother. After having children, the Nias people developed on the island. This negative assumption or brand of story has developed in the Nagari Tiku community since ancient times. Apart from that, the Minangkabau people of Nagari Tiku also think that if the Nias ethnic group is pitied, they will be free. For example, Nias people ask for watermelons in Minangkabau people's gardens; if the land owner allows it, then tomorrow or the next day, Nias people will take the watermelons without permission (PT Mutiara and Agam, observation, 17 May 2022).

Also, from an interview with Mr Anto, a transporter of palm oil for factory processing.

“Kami disini berinteraksi menggunakan bahasa Indonesia, ada juga yang mengerti mungkin karena mereka sudah lama juga menetap dan terbiasa mendengar kami sesama minang berkomunikasi menggunakan

bahasa tradisonal tetapi mereka tidak bisa mengucapkannya dan hanya sebatas paham saja apa yang sedang kami bicarakan. Namun terkadang masih terdapat kesalahpahaman dalam menyampaikan informasi dan terkadang adalah salah persepsi. Sama halnya ketika mereka menggunakan bahasa nias saat berinteraksi sesama mereka. Uniknya kami terkadang sama-sama belajar bahasa tradisional masing-masing” (Anto, interview, 14 May 2022)

From the statement above, it can be identified that the most crucial obstacle encountered is the language barrier, especially when dealing with workers who still cannot speak Indonesian. Of course, you can imagine how difficult it is to communicate. According to Mr. Mikin and Mr. Anto's explanation, language differences are a source of obstacles in intercultural communication if they meet people from different ethnicities.

Apart from barriers related to the language used, Mr Anto also said that the barriers often encountered are differences in perception. Mr Anto realises that it is normal for there to be differences, especially with different cultural backgrounds. Realising that humans are different makes people more aware of these differences. Even though there are barriers to intercultural communication, people often place themselves in the same position as people from different cultures. As a result, it provides a standard reference according to culture, which is not necessarily the same as other cultures. This is what becomes an obstacle, namely, not realising that there are differences. However, in this case, the lack of

awareness of differences is not from the researcher's perspective but rather from the perspective of inter-ethnic workers with diverse origins.

Siti Rahma Harahap highlighted that barriers in communication are caused by differences in individual experiences, which influence their perceptions and thinking concepts. Another study found that South Korean and Australian marketing staff have different views regarding time value due to their different life experiences and cultures. The way they approach time is influenced by their individual characteristics and cultural viewpoints (Rahma Harahap and the Key to Obstacles 2021)

Furthermore, the potential problem found was prejudice. Prejudice can cause someone to have a lousy view of something, so stereotypes and discrimination may emerge. Like an interview with Mrs. Jusnawilis :

“Sepertinya orang nias itu tidak suka berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat di sini, mereka kayaknya lebih nyaman berkomunikasi dengan sesama suku nias. Dari keseharian yang saya lihat agaknya mereka kurang terbuka dan tidak terlalu pandai bersosialisasi dengan kita. Saya sebagai pemilik warung cukup jarang melihat mereka di sini untuk sekedar bersosialisasi, hanya untuk keperluan yang penting tertentu komunikasi terjadi seperti beli makanan dan lain-lain.” (Jurnawilis, interview, 14 May 2022)

If someone is prejudiced against another person, then the prejudiced person feels inferior and guilty. The victim will wonder why they are considered inferior even though they have not done anything wrong. It

does not rule out the possibility that the victim is lazy about communicating with others. In our social life, we always want to experience peaceful social interaction to create harmony. However, something like that will not happen as long as there is still a prejudice that a person has towards other people or specific groups. Prejudice can also create feelings of hatred so that hostility can arise.

Apart from that, there is also withdrawal behavior which is a potential problem of intercultural communication for the Minang ethnic group. Results of an interview with Ante Siska, the wife of Mr. Lahoi, an employee of PT Mutiara Agam:

“Lebih ke kami yang sulit berinteraksi dengan mereka, mereka baik buktinya kami diterima disini padahal orang minang itu terkenal tegas apalagi kalau masalah budaya dan agama. Jadi lebih ke kitanya untuk menjaga sikap karena kami pendatang” (Siska, interview, 14 September 2022)

From the results of these interviews, it can be seen that Minang workers have opened up to interacting with Nias ethnic groups. They have entirely accepted the presence of Nias people in their territory as official residents. In interactions, the Minang ethnic group maintains certain boundaries based on Minangkabau culture.

Ethnocentrism is also a significant problem in intercultural communication of the Minang ethnic group. Usually, ethnocentrism is an attitude of viewing and interpreting another person or group based on the values that exist in one's own culture. Not just judging, ethnocentrism considers other cultures

inferior to its own. This kind of attitude is often the cause of national disintegration.

From the interview with Mr. Agus, that

“Urang Niah ko ndak ba adaik, a nan dapek je nyo makan tu mah, kok caro bapakaian e yo mode tu lo. Awak ko dima barado yo harus ma ikuik aturan dima wak tingga. Kok raso pareso yo ndak ado dek e do baa kecek sia waang sia aden je nyo” (Agus, interview, 19 May 2022)

Translation :

“Nias people are not traditional; whatever they eat, their everyday clothes are different. As Minang people, we think they have to follow the rules here. Moreover, even if they are considerate, they are less like who you are, who I am.”

Feelings of difference from other cultures and religions are sometimes still felt in society because they are considered to have very different habits. This can include daily habits and other traditions. Even though each religion has different views, individuals tend to question these differences or accept them to create peace. Although differences in views in social life can cause various problems, many are related to trust and sensitivity towards these matters nowadays. However, various methods can be used to resolve issues of differing views, depending on the context and who is involved.

In other research, the discussion regarding Minangkabau ethnicity is very complex. The results of Satria and Sahayu's research emphasise that traditional Minangkabau society uses nature as a guide to life and as a source of analogy in generating

norms that regulate life, as well as guiding thinking and acting. This natural philosophy is contained in the *natural teachings of Takambang becoming a teacher*. Learning from nature and one's own and other people's life experiences is the dominant thinking orientation in Minangkabau society (Satria and Sahayu 2022).

In everyday life, Minangkabau people tend to be more democratic and open. According to Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana, the formation of democratic character in Minangkabau men starts from the pattern of life in the surau, where Minangkabau children and teenagers learn to read the Qur'an (Khaliki, Putri, and Khasanah 2023). This confirms Islam's influence in forming democratic values in Minangkabau society, reflected in social life in the surau, where Minangkabau men have greater freedom than other cultures. At the surau, they live separately from their parents and with their peers under the guidance of traditional leaders, who foster a spirit of togetherness, mutual protection and self-confidence. This pattern encourages Minangkabau youth to have a democratic attitude and feel freer in expressing their opinions, with a more rational relationship towards their teachers and leaders than their parents (Akhyar et al. 2023).

The surau's upbringing pattern also influences the social characteristics of children. The imam and preacher relatively less obstruct children's initiatives at the surau. Thus, children's initiative and thinking develop freely when exchanging ideas and debating. This

condition fosters a democratic attitude and flexibility in expressing opinions, as well as fostering self-confidence. Apart from the habit of living communally in Surau, the democratic character of Minangkabau society is also built by natural philosophy (Chaniago 2020).

In rural Minangkabau, Minang people tend to accept hierarchy and naturally recognise each person's position without questioning it. They prefer not to be integrated into groups because they live separately and far from their neighbours. Therefore, Minang people are accustomed to minimising uncertain and unusual conditions by slowly turning them into certainty through implementing rules, laws and regulations at home. In addition, parents in rural areas believe that everything needs to be regulated by strict norms. They prioritise competition, assertiveness, materials, ambition and power as the impact of the desire to obtain a guaranteed source of livelihood (Yanti 2023).

3.3. Potential Problems of Intercultural Communication of Nias Ethnic Workers in the Acculturation Process

The Nias ethnic group came to Nagari Tiku starting in 1985 AD. PT Mutiara Agam brought in the influx of Nias ethnic groups as workers on the company's land. Ethnic Nias workers who live in Nagari Tiku live according to their work. Nias, who works as a worker at PT Mutiara Agam, will be facilitated to live in housing provided by the company. They live in this housing for free, including electricity, which the company covers. The Nias ethnic settlement pattern in Nagari Tiku generally follows the existing roads in PT

Mutiara Agam's oil palm plantations. Meanwhile, ethnic Nias who work as cultivators build huts in their fields or on community land with freehold status (PT Mutiara and Agam, observation, 25 May 2022). Their settlement pattern is spreading out and making huts far from community settlements. The distance between one hut and another is far apart, so visiting another hut takes quite a long time.

In general, the livelihood of the Nias ethnic group in Nagari Tiku is as workers on PT Mutiara Agam land and as farmers on community land. On PT Mutiara Agam's land, they work as harvest workers, lifting palm oil, cleaning oil palm land and so on. It is natural for them to work in positions like that because the education of Nias, who moved to Nagari Tiku, is generally only elementary school (SD) or junior high school (SMP). Nias ethnic groups who do not work in companies choose to farm on Minangkabau community land. Working at PT Mutiara Agam, Etnis Nias feels happy because she has a clear salary every month. Their salary meets their family's living needs (PT Mutiara and Agam, observation, 25 May 2022).



Figure 2. Palm Harvester

There are three religions in Nagari Tiku: Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism. Most Nias ethnic groups in Nagari Tiku follow the Protestant Christian religion. The means of worship for Protestant Christians is the church, but in Nagari Tiku, it is not available as a place of worship for Protestant Christians. Nias ethnic groups of Protestant Christians worship on Sundays in their respective homes. In this house, the congregation has a capacity of 5 to 15 people in one week.

The Nias ethnic group, as immigrants to Nagari Tiku, tends to be more closed in their interactions with Minangkabau people in daily life. On holidays or after work, more Nias people sit in his house and sometimes hang out at his neighbour's house from Nias, while visiting his neighbours who are native Minangkabau people is very rare unless there is a need for each party.



Figure 3. Nias Ethnic Community

The findings that researchers got from several Nias people who rarely socialise with Minangkabau people because they are afraid of making mistakes in speaking. Researchers observed that during the research, Nias people rarely played at the houses of Minangkabau people in their neighbourhood. This differs from Javanese immigrants, who seem close and familiar with Minangkabau people in their daily interactions.

Table 2. Potential Problems of Nias Ethnicity

Potential Problems	Nias Ethnic Workers
Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comes from the dog tribe - It smells fishy because it eats pork - Likes to get drunk - Called <i>rang Nieh</i> - Likes to do whatever he wants when permitted to take something in the Minang ethnic fields

Improve Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limitations in communication - The average Nias ethnic group cannot speak Minang.
Avoiding Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refusing to join local community events - Avoid internal interactions with Minang ethnic groups
Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is dangerous to interact with ethnic Nias - Uncultured - Minang ethnic trust in Nias is very minimal
Withdraw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of connection with other communities - Less open and not very good at socialising
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nias workers do not hold high positions - Traditional leaders from the Minang ethnic group are in control
Ethnocentrism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Underestimating Minang customs - Not following local community norms

3.4. Potential Communication Problems Between Minangkabau Ethnic Workers in the Acculturation Process

Minangkabau culture is one of the two primary cultures in the archipelago and is very prominent and influential. The meeting of Nias ethnic workers with the Minangkabau tribe, a large tribe known for its strong customs, was not an easy thing for the Nias people. They encountered many differences when living in Minangkabau society at that time. Fear and anxiety become turmoil that they have to accept every day. The Minangkabau people call customs that cannot be changed *nan sava*, which contain the meaning

of goodness. This custom, which is based on the traditional expression *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*, is firmly held and exists in the outlook on life and behavior of the Minangkabau people.



Figure 4. Jalan PT Mutiara Agam

Before the arrival of Western nations in the archipelago, custom was the only system that governed society and government. Islam is generally integrated with the customs used. Minangkabau customs are the same as the customs of other tribes, but they have several differences or peculiarities that differentiate them. This particularity is mainly because the Minang people have adopted a maternal, matrilineal lineage system. Another important peculiarity is that everyone in all corners uses Minang customs evenly. Every individual is bound and involved with custom; almost all adult men hold customary titles, and all kinship relationships are regulated by custom (Nashori et al. 2020).

Several differences are highlighted, resulting in misunderstandings in communication between ethnic workers. Nias ethnic groups who become immigrants to Nagari Tiku must follow all the regulations that have become a mutual agreement.

However, several factors become problems in interactions between ethnic groups.

Table 3. Minang Ethnic Communication Problems

Potential Problems	Minang Ethnic Workers
Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be firm in acting and making decisions - Selfish - Calculating and stingy
Increase Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited understanding of the Nias language - Use regional languages
Avoiding Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must not own permanent land - It is not permitted to build places of worship - Strict customary rules
Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of tolerance towards others, especially towards other people who have different cultures - acting superior because they feel that their ethnicity and local ethnicity dominate
Withdraw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The attitude of the people is very traditional - Interaction occurs only for purposes only
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominate in decision making - Many Minang ethnic groups are high-ranking officials at PT
Ethnocentrism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mocking the Nias ethnic group - Isolate and avoid

friendship with Nias ethnic groups

- Always proud that the Minang ethnic group is more advanced than the Nias ethnic group
-

3.5. Forms of Cultural Acculturation of Nias Ethnic Workers and Minang Ethnic Workers

a. Language Aspects

The Nias ethnic group, as migrants in Nagari Tiku, first came to use Indonesian when they wanted to interact with the Minangkabau ethnic group or other ethnic groups. When interacting with fellow Nias, they use their regional language.

b. Social Aspects

Pig hunting activities are one way for Nias ethnic groups to adjust themselves to Nagari Tiku society. Many Minangkabau men in Nagari Tiku have a hobby of hunting pigs. Pig hunting is held once a week or every Saturday from this pig hunting sports activity. The aim of the Nias ethnic group in joining the sport of pig hunting is to get to know the Minangkabau people and also to take the meat of pigs that have been shot dead by hunters. In this hunt, there is a form of agreement between the Nias ethnic group and the Minangkabau ethnic group, namely that if the Nias ethnic group wants to bring home a pig that has been shot dead by the Minangkabau ethnic group, then the Nias ethnic group must pay a modest amount of money to the person who shot the pig. Usually, the money paid to people shooting pigs is IDR 50,000 (what Nias people

can afford). The money was used to buy rifle bullets or treat injured dogs. The advantage for the Minang people after the Nias brought the pork home was that there was no strong smell of the carcass at that location.



Figure 5. Pig hunting activities

c. Adaptation to Food

Because ethnic Nias workers are immigrants, they have to follow all the rules in Minangkabau, one of which is adapting to typical Minangkabau food. Rendang is one of the menus served during traditional events or other events. Ethnic Nias workers who live in Nagari Tiku rarely serve typical Minangkabau food when there are weddings, death ceremonies or other events because the Nias ethnic group is not good at cooking typical Minangkabau food and has never learned it from Minangkabau people. Hence, the Nias ethnic group only serves the food—standard in general, except pork.



Figure 6. Marandang activities

4. Conclusions and suggestions

Intercultural communication in the work environment often faces potential challenges and problems. This happened at PT Mutiara Agam, where there was a gap between ethnic Nias workers as immigrants and ethnic Minang workers as native residents. Negative stereotypes, limited communication skills, attitudes avoiding uncertainty and prejudice, and the tendency to withdraw from social interactions complicate company intercultural relations. On the other hand, ethnic Minang workers also face similar problems, such as being stereotyped as an ethnic group who are strict, self-centred, calculating and stingy. Other obstacles include limited understanding of the Nias language, tendency to use regional languages, efforts to avoid uncertainty with strict customary rules, prejudice, withdrawal from social interactions, dominance in decision-making, and ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, acculturation efforts are still carried out through flexible use of language, pig hunting activities as a means of cultural adaptation, and culinary adjustments, even though the Nias ethnic group tends to maintain the habit of eating pork. By exploring the dynamics of intercultural communication between these two ethnic groups, interested parties can use it as a reference to broaden their understanding of the challenges and opportunities of achieving harmony and harmony in a culturally diverse work environment.

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