

Intercultural Marriages in Kandri Village: Cultural Dynamics, Diplomacy, and International Relations

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of mixed, or transnational, marriages in Kandri Village, Central Java, with particular emphasis on cultural interaction, diplomacy, and international relations. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with mixed-marriage couples, participant observation, and analysis of supporting documents. The findings reveal that mixed-marriage couples in Kandri Village embody substantial cultural pluralism and exhibit strong adaptive capacities despite encountering challenges related to divergent value systems, language differences, and societal perceptions. Processes of cultural adaptation and acculturation manifest in everyday practices, including religious celebrations, culinary habits, and approaches to children's education. The study further demonstrates that mixed marriages function as an informal yet influential channel of cultural diplomacy. Couples often serve as cultural intermediaries who foster mutual understanding, enhance cross-cultural tolerance, and contribute to cooperative international engagement. At the community level, the presence of mixed marriages enriches local culture and generates progressive social transformation. This research offers practical recommendations for mixed-marriage couples, governmental bodies, and relevant institutions to strengthen support mechanisms that facilitate cultural adaptation and promote international collaboration. It also highlights the need for longitudinal and interdisciplinary studies to deepen understanding of the long-term implications of mixed-marriage dynamics. Overall, the study contributes meaningful insights into the cultural, diplomatic, and societal significance of mixed marriages in Kandri Village.

Keywords: *Mixed Marriage; Kandri Village; Cultural Diplomacy; International Relations; Acculturation.*

Introduction

General Description of Kandri Village

Kandri Village is an administrative unit under the jurisdiction of the Semarang City Government, Central Java. The village plays a strategic role in supporting regional tourism development, particularly through its sustained efforts to preserve local cultural values and traditional heritage. A defining characteristic of Kandri is its ability to harmonize long-standing cultural traditions with the realities of contemporary social change. While the community embraces modernization, it simultaneously protects and revitalizes traditional practices, creating a balanced environment where cultural heritage and social transformation coexist productively.

Geographically, Kandri Village spans approximately 319.64 hectares, comprising around 221.37 hectares of residential or built-up areas and 97.62 hectares of green open spaces and rice fields. According to demographic records for 2022, the village is home to 5,115 residents, with a relatively balanced gender distribution—2,573 males and 2,542 females. These demographic and spatial characteristics reflect a landscape in which natural environments remain well preserved, enhancing Kandri's position as a tourism village known for its scenic surroundings

and ecological integrity. The stable population structure further contributes to the maintenance of social harmony and community cohesion.

Located in the Gunungpati District of Semarang City, Kandri Village is distinguished not only by its natural beauty but also by its cultural richness and deeply rooted traditions. As a designated tourism village, Kandri offers authentic cultural experiences through traditional festivals, ritual celebrations, and community-based activities that attract both domestic and international visitors. The Semarang City Government continues to prioritize its development, recognizing Kandri as one of the region's leading tourism assets. This recognition is supported by the community's ongoing commitment to safeguarding its cultural and natural heritage across generations.

Kandri's formal designation as a Tourism Village was established on 21 December 2012 through Semarang Mayor's Decree No. 556/407, alongside two other villages. This recognition underscores the village's considerable potential based on its natural attractions and cultural heritage. One of its strategic advantages lies in its proximity to major tourist destinations in Central Java, such as Kreo Cave and Jatibarang Reservoir, which enhance its attractiveness and stimulate local economic activity. Tourism has therefore become a significant driver of economic development in Kandri, contributing to higher household incomes and improvements in community welfare.

Within the broader Indonesian context, tourism holds substantial importance as a sector closely tied to international relations, economic growth, and cultural exchange. As the world's largest archipelagic nation, Indonesia possesses diverse natural resources, cultural expressions, and local wisdom that shape distinct regional strengths. For regions with limited industrial capacity but abundant cultural assets and natural beauty, tourism functions as a primary economic catalyst, generating wide-ranging multiplier effects that support local development.

Tourism governance in Indonesia is regulated under Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, which outlines national objectives such as improving public welfare, strengthening national identity, and promoting sustainable economic advancement. The law emphasizes integrated planning, environmental preservation, cultural safeguarding, and multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government institutions, private enterprises, and local communities. From this framework, tourism is understood as a multidimensional and multidisciplinary activity rooted in interactions among tourists, host communities, government authorities, and industry actors.

Kandri's development as a Tourism Village reflects this collaborative approach. Community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives play a central role, particularly through local organizations such as Pokdarwis Pandanaran and Pokdarwis Sukomakmur, which coordinate tourism activities, manage homestays, and promote cultural attractions. The transformation into a tourism-oriented settlement has also reshaped Kandri's built environment, with many homes being adapted for tourism-related functions, including lodging, culinary services, and souvenir production. Educational institutions have further supported these efforts by translating village profiles and creating multilingual tourism guides in Indonesian, English, and Japanese, thereby strengthening Kandri's international visibility.

Overall, Kandri Village exemplifies how traditional cultural values can coexist with modern development. Its sustained commitment to cultural preservation, combined with active community participation and strategic institutional collaboration, has positioned Kandri as a model of sustainable tourism development in Indonesia. By offering authentic cultural

experiences while continuously enhancing its tourism infrastructure, Kandri remains well placed to attract global visitors and reinforce its reputation as a destination rich in cultural and ecological significance.

Literature Study

Mixed Marriages in Kandri Village: From Tradition to Cultural Diplomacy

Kandri Village, located in the Gunungpati District of Semarang City, Central Java, offers a compelling illustration of how tourism and cultural diversity converge to shape a unique socio-cultural landscape. Known for its natural beauty and distinctive cultural traditions, the village has long attracted tourists seeking authentic cultural encounters through traditional festivals, ritual practices, and community-driven activities. As local residents and international visitors interact, Kandri has gradually evolved into a site where diverse cultural worlds intersect.

The intensification of globalization further amplifies this dynamic. With increasing ease of access to information and mobility, interactions among individuals of different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds have become more frequent. These interactions often lead to deeper forms of cultural exchange and acculturation, including marriages between local residents and foreigners who visit Kandri as tourists, volunteers, or researchers.

Within this context, tourism emerges as an important platform for cultural diplomacy, particularly in socially vibrant tourism villages such as Kandri. Tourism in Kandri is not limited to recreational activities or natural sightseeing; it also serves as a medium through which cultural values, local wisdom, and Indonesia's identity are communicated to international audiences. The presence of mixed marriages in the village exemplifies how tourism operates as an informal but influential channel of cultural diplomacy—strengthening cross-cultural understanding, enhancing Indonesia's global image, and fostering interpersonal connections that bridge national boundaries.

The Phenomenon of Mixed Marriages

Mixed marriages in Indonesia are increasingly common and represent one of the social outcomes of the country's expanding global tourism visibility. Indonesia's rich cultural diversity, distinctive regional traditions, and natural attractions have long drawn international attention. This interest has been further reinforced by the government's nation-branding efforts through the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign, launched in 2011, which promotes Indonesia's natural landscapes, cultural heritage, culinary traditions, and creative industries to global audiences.

As a form of public diplomacy, Wonderful Indonesia strengthens Indonesia's international image and enhances its attractiveness as a tourist destination. Tourism serves as a key instrument through which global audiences engage with Indonesia's cultural assets. The increase in international tourist arrivals reflects the success of these efforts: by December 2023, Indonesia recorded 1.14 million international visitors—an increase of 22.91% from the previous month and 20.17% from the previous year.

Kandri Village has benefited significantly from this growth. As a formally designated Tourism Village, Kandri has become increasingly appealing to foreign visitors due to its strong commitment to preserving cultural practices and its attractive natural environment. Tourism has generated substantial economic benefits for the community, including the establishment of

homestays, the strengthening of local human resources, the growth of agriculture-based micro-industries, and the creation of new employment opportunities. These shifts have enabled residents to diversify their economic activities beyond traditional agricultural roles.

The rise in international tourist arrivals has also transformed the village's social dynamics. One notable consequence is the increasing number of mixed marriages between local residents and foreign nationals. Such unions symbolize the convergence of two cultural systems, with each spouse bringing their own language, traditions, and values into the household. These marriages not only reshape family structures but also influence broader community interactions, reinforcing Kandri's multicultural environment.

In legal terms, mixed marriages in Indonesia are defined under Law No. 1 of 1974, Article 57, as marriages between individuals subject to different national legal systems, with at least one spouse being an Indonesian citizen. The growing presence of mixed marriages in Kandri Village can thus be understood as a social phenomenon emerging from sustained cultural interactions facilitated by tourism.

Religious and Legal Aspects of Mixed Marriages

Mixed marriages in Indonesia—including those occurring in Kandri Village—are shaped by both religious and legal considerations. According to Law No. 1 of 1974, a marriage is deemed valid only if conducted in accordance with the religious laws and beliefs of the respective parties. This requirement often presents complexities when couples come from different religious backgrounds, leading to dilemmas regarding legal recognition, religious ceremony requirements, and acceptance within religious communities.

While mixed marriages are legally permissible, challenges arise when couples must navigate differing legal systems or religious doctrines. For marriages involving foreign nationals, additional procedures are required, such as obtaining a letter of no impediment from the foreign spouse's embassy, certifying that the marriage violates no legal barriers in their home country.

Moreover, the religious dimension remains deeply embedded in Indonesia's social fabric. Religious norms influence community perceptions and may shape how mixed marriages are accepted or contested. Couples must therefore manage not only bureaucratic processes but also cultural expectations and religious obligations that affect household life, family formation, and community belonging.

These complexities highlight the importance of understanding Indonesia's legal and religious frameworks when analysing mixed marriages. Successful marital life requires navigating both domains, ensuring the marriage is legally recognized while maintaining harmony across cultural and religious differences.

Social Implications and Cultural Diplomacy

The presence of mixed marriages in Kandri Village extends beyond interpersonal relationships and produces wider social implications for the community. Such marriages serve as conduits for intercultural exchange, allowing the mutual transfer of customs, languages, and values between local residents and foreign spouses. This process enriches community life, broadens social perspectives, and fosters greater acceptance of cultural differences.

From an international relations standpoint, mixed marriages can function as informal yet effective instruments of cultural diplomacy. These unions often establish personal networks that strengthen bilateral relations between Indonesia and the home countries of foreign spouses. Through daily interactions, foreign spouses become cultural intermediaries who introduce Indonesian traditions, norms, and cultural values to broader audiences abroad. This deep form of cultural engagement aligns with the principles of people-to-people diplomacy, contributing to more durable and meaningful cross-cultural relationships.

Thus, mixed marriages in Kandri Village not only shape individual life trajectories but also create pathways for enhancing Indonesia's cultural presence at the global level. Effective management of their social implications—through legal support, community engagement, and cultural understanding—is essential to maximizing their positive contributions.

Future Prospects

As an officially designated Tourism Village, Kandri holds considerable potential for continued development. Its strategic location near major attractions such as Kreo Cave and Jatibarang Reservoir strengthens its appeal to domestic and international visitors. The Semarang City Government has positioned Kandri as part of its broader effort to reduce poverty and unemployment by empowering local communities through tourism.

Tourism development in Kandri is grounded in community participation, emphasizing local leadership, cultural preservation, and the responsible use of natural resources. With its rich cultural and environmental assets, Kandri demonstrates how tourism can serve as a catalyst for sustainable local development.

Moving forward, stronger synergy between local communities, government institutions, and international partners remains essential. Enhancing infrastructure, improving accessibility, strengthening tourism services, and expanding capacity-building initiatives for residents are critical steps to sustain growth. With appropriate support, Kandri Village is well positioned to continue serving as a model for tourism development—one that integrates cultural heritage, community empowerment, and economic advancement.

In short, Kandri Village represents a prime example of how cultural and tourism development can be integrated to enhance community welfare. Its continued growth will depend on effective collaboration, sustained cultural preservation, and strategic tourism innovation. With these elements in place, Kandri Village can solidify its role as a leading tourism village both nationally and internationally.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences, cultural dynamics, and diplomatic implications of mixed marriages in Kandri Village. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten local informants selected via purposive sampling to ensure relevance and diversity of perspectives. Each interview was conducted in a naturalistic setting to encourage open, reflective narratives, and was audio-recorded with participant consent. The data were subsequently transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis, following an iterative coding process that included open coding, categorisation, and the identification of overarching themes. This analytic approach

enabled the systematic interpretation of patterns related to cultural adaptation, acculturation processes, and social interactions within mixed-marriage households.

Research Results and Discussions

The Importance of Examining Mixed Marriages in Kandri Village within the Context of Culture, Diplomacy, and International Relations

The study of mixed or transnational marriages in Kandri Village, Central Java, is essential due to its broad implications for cultural transformation, diplomacy, and international relations. These marital unions, which merge distinct cultural traditions, offer valuable insights into how local values interact with, adapt to, and evolve alongside external cultural influences. Examining mixed marriages enables a deeper understanding of how residents negotiate differences in religion, language, and customary practices, and how such negotiations shape the preservation or reconfiguration of cultural identity within the community (Lubis, Kurniawan, & Pohan, 2020). This inquiry is also pertinent for assessing the wider social outcomes of diversity, particularly in relation to community acceptance and social cohesion. Beyond their cultural significance, mixed marriages function as informal mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, with couples often serving as conduits for cross-cultural understanding and cooperation between Indonesia and their spouses' home countries.

Accordingly, this research sheds light on how interpersonal and familial interactions can influence international relations and facilitate intercultural connectivity at the societal level.

1. Cultural Aspects

Indonesia, as one of the world's most culturally diverse nations—home to 1,340 ethnic groups and more than 2,500 languages—possesses an exceptionally rich tapestry of traditions, values, and cultural expressions (Statistics Indonesia, 2021). This diversity forms a dynamic multicultural framework that strengthens national identity, fosters social resilience, and supports economic development through tourism and the creative industries (Antara & Yogantari, 2018). In an era of intensified global interconnectedness, cultural interaction across borders has become increasingly frequent, accelerated by digital communication and transnational mobility. Culture, broadly conceptualized as the system of beliefs, values, and practices that guide social behaviour (Meyer, 2014; Koentjaraningrat, 1999), plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals interact, communicate, and negotiate meaning.

Within this context, mixed marriages in Kandri Village exemplify a nuanced site of cultural encounter where local traditions intersect with external cultural influences. Processes of assimilation, acculturation, and negotiation that occur within these marriages (Turner, 1993) illuminate broader patterns of cultural transformation in the village. Understanding how cultural elements are adapted, integrated, or contested enables a deeper appreciation of how local heritage can both persist and evolve in response to global cultural flows (Hannerz, 1996). Mixed marriages thus represent a microcosm of cultural hybridity, generating both challenges—such as value differences and lifestyle contrasts—and opportunities, including increased international visibility, enhanced tourism potential, and stronger people-to-people linkages that contribute to cultural diplomacy. The continual exchange of languages, traditions, and social norms within mixed-marriage households also expands intercultural understanding, opening pathways for collaboration in areas such as education, economics, and tourism, while simultaneously broadening transnational social networks.

2. Diplomatic Aspects

Mixed marriages also serve as significant diplomatic bridges, linking Indonesia with the home countries of international spouses. As Faist (2000) and Vertovec (2004) suggest, transnational families function as nodes of social connectivity that can reinforce bilateral relations through informal cultural diplomacy. In Kandri Village, mixed marriages facilitate sustained intercultural dialogue and exchange, allowing couples and their extended networks to become active participants in transmitting cultural knowledge and fostering mutual understanding. Such interactions reduce cultural prejudices, enhance social tolerance, and contribute to a more favourable diplomatic climate (Hall & Lamont, 2013).

At the same time, mixed marriages embody core principles of cultural diplomacy, which relies on the diffusion of cultural practices—ranging from language and culinary traditions to art and customary knowledge—to shape positive perceptions and strengthen cross-border relationships (Sumarto, 2018; Mori, 2018; Purwasito & Kartinawati, 2019). Through daily interactions, families formed through mixed marriages often act as informal ambassadors of their respective cultures, demonstrating the operationalisation of soft power in enhancing international goodwill (Nye, 2014). Children of mixed marriages, some of whom hold dual citizenship, can further extend these transnational ties by serving as cultural and social intermediaries across fields such as education, economics, and politics (LeBaron, 2003). Thus, mixed marriages not only affect personal and familial dynamics but also cultivate transnational networks that deepen diplomatic engagement and support more substantive cross-cultural cooperation.

3. International Relations Aspects

In the broader landscape of globalization, mixed marriages represent a compelling lens through which to examine the interplay between personal relationships and international relations. Migration and mixed marriages introduce complex questions of identity, loyalty, and belonging (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007), while simultaneously generating opportunities for intercultural understanding and global diplomacy.

From the perspective of international relations, mixed marriages may raise challenges at political, social, economic, and legal levels.

- *Legal and Citizenship Challenges.*

Mixed marriages often involve navigating intricate legal frameworks related to immigration status, residency, and citizenship. Variations in national regulations governing foreign spouses' rights can affect mobility, legal recognition, and family stability (Alba & Foner, 2014). Individuals in such unions frequently engage in processes of acculturation and identity negotiation (Berry, 1997). While Indonesia generally does not permit dual citizenship, limited exceptions under Law No. 12 of 2006 demonstrate the legal complexities inherent in transnational family formation (Agustin, 2023).

- *National Loyalty.*

Issues of national loyalty may arise as families balance expectations from two different national contexts. Conflicting demands regarding political or cultural allegiance can place emotional and social strain on couples (Huntington, 1993), and such tensions may indirectly influence inter-state perceptions or policy dialogues.

- *Cultural Differences and Diplomatic Implications.*

Marked cultural differences between spouses can shape household dynamics and, by extension, societal perceptions. While these differences may lead to challenges, mixed couples frequently play an instrumental role as agents of cultural diplomacy, promoting soft power through the sharing of languages, traditions, and cultural practices (Nye, 2014).

These everyday acts of cultural transmission can strengthen international goodwill and contribute to more harmonious cross-cultural relations.

4. Overall Implications

Taken together, mixed or transnational marriages highlight how intimate, interpersonal relationships can intersect with and influence broader international dynamics. These unions create both opportunities and challenges: they may complicate issues of citizenship, identity, and loyalty, yet they simultaneously expand cultural diplomacy, reinforce bilateral ties, and promote mutual understanding. Consequently, mixed marriages serve as important socio-cultural and diplomatic linkages that shape political, cultural, and social relations between nations while profoundly affecting the experiences of the families involved.

Conclusions

The phenomenon of mixed marriages in Kandri Village reveals a complex interplay of cultural interaction, adaptation, and transformation. The findings of this study underscore that acculturation processes and intercultural negotiation are central to the everyday lives of couples originating from different national backgrounds. Despite encountering challenges such as differing worldviews, language barriers, and societal perceptions, transnational couples in Kandri have demonstrated a strong capacity to integrate foreign cultural elements with local values in ways that enrich both family life and community dynamics.

Furthermore, mixed marriages in Kandri hold broader significance within the spheres of cultural diplomacy and international relations. These couples frequently serve as informal cultural ambassadors who foster mutual understanding, intercultural tolerance, and cooperative relations between Indonesia and the countries of origin of foreign spouses. Their presence in the village contributes to the emergence of a more inclusive and culturally diverse social environment, highlighting the potential of mixed marriages to act as instruments of soft diplomacy that strengthen bilateral ties and enhance Indonesia's cultural visibility abroad.

The social impacts observed in this study include increased intercultural tolerance, positive community transformation, and the enrichment of local cultural practices. Through these marriages, Kandri Village gains expanded transnational linkages and deeper cross-cultural connections, enabling the community to engage more meaningfully with global social networks.

Given these findings, it is essential for government institutions to provide targeted support that facilitates the successful integration of mixed-marriage couples. Effective policy interventions can ensure that these unions continue to function as drivers of cultural diplomacy and contributors to strong international relations.

Overall, this study demonstrates that mixed marriages in Kandri Village shape not only the personal experiences of the couples involved but also the broader cultural, social, and diplomatic landscape of the community. A deeper understanding of both the opportunities and challenges presented by transnational marriages can enable society and policymakers to better harness their potential for strengthening cultural diplomacy and advancing international cooperation.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations are proposed to support mixed-marriage couples in Kandri Village and amplify the cultural, diplomatic, and social benefits associated with these unions:

1. *Strengthen Government Support for Mixed-Marriage Households*
Local and national governments should design policies and programs that facilitate the legal, social, and cultural integration of transnational couples. Priority areas include simplifying bureaucratic procedures, expanding access to legal assistance, and providing clear regulatory guidance regarding citizenship, residency rights, and marriage registration.
2. *Enhance Intercultural Education and Community Awareness*
Initiatives that promote intercultural literacy and community understanding should be encouraged. Workshops, cultural dialogue forums, and exchange activities can help reduce stereotypes, improve intercultural competence, and strengthen social cohesion between local residents and foreign spouses.
3. *Provide Counselling and Mediation Services*
Dedicated counselling and mediation services are essential given the unique challenges faced by mixed-marriage couples, including cultural differences, communication barriers, and adjustment issues. Support programs offered through local institutions or community-based organizations can contribute to healthier and more resilient family dynamics.
4. *Promote Cultural Diplomacy through Tourism Programs*
As a recognized tourism village, Kandri can further elevate the role of mixed-marriage families in its cultural diplomacy initiatives. Their multicultural backgrounds can be showcased in cultural festivals, heritage events, and tourism campaigns, reinforcing Kandri's image as an inclusive and cosmopolitan destination.
5. *Encourage Academic Research and Policy-Oriented Studies*
Further empirical research is needed to explore long-term outcomes of mixed marriages, including identity development in children, intergenerational cultural transmission, and the broader socio-political implications of transnational family life. Such studies can serve as critical references for formulating evidence-based and context-responsive policies.
6. *Develop Collaborative Platforms with Partner Countries*
Bilateral cooperation initiatives in education, culture, and community development should be expanded to leverage the unique transnational positions of mixed-marriage families. Such partnerships can strengthen people-to-people diplomacy, deepen cross-cultural collaboration, and support broader international engagement.

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