

Adaptation of Remarried Couples in Mandailing: Cultural and Traditional Perspectives from Nagari Sungai Aur, West Pasaman Regency

Annisa Rahmi¹, Fachrina², Jendrius³, M. Fedro Syafiola⁴

Andalas University, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

Email: ¹rahmianisa94@gmail.com, ^{2*}fachrinasos@gmail.com,

³jendrius@soc.unand.ac.id, ⁴fedro3103@gmail.com



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* Corresponding Author



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Abstract. Remarriage represents a significant phenomenon affecting family dynamics in contemporary society, particularly given the rising divorce rates. This study aims to examine adaptation strategies employed by remarried couples in Nagari Sungai Aur, West Pasaman District, within the Mandailing cultural context. Using a qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews and observations, the research explores how couples navigate complexities such as role restructuring, effective communication, trust reconstruction, and integrating children from previous marriages. Data were collected through purposive sampling, focusing on remarried couples within the past three years who had children from previous marriages. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's three-stage approach: data coding, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that adaptation occurs through behavioral modifications, maintaining communication, understanding character differences, building relationships with stepchildren, and strengthening ties with the husband's extended family. Challenges encountered include economic issues and feelings of alienation due to the patrilocal system, which emphasizes the husband's extended family as the center of familial ties. This research highlights the importance of adaptive strategies in strengthening household harmony for remarried women within the Mandailing cultural context. Practical implications include guidance on improving communication, fostering positive relationships with stepchildren, and addressing cultural challenges to enhance marital resilience.

Keywords: Remarriage, adaptation strategies, mandailing culture, patrilocal system.

Abstrak. Pernikahan ulang merupakan fenomena signifikan yang memengaruhi dinamika keluarga di masyarakat kontemporer, terutama dengan meningkatnya angka perceraian. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji strategi adaptasi oleh pasangan yang menikah ulang di Nagari Sungai Aur, Kabupaten Pasaman Barat, dalam konteks budaya Mandailing. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pasangan menghadapi berbagai kompleksitas, seperti restrukturisasi peran, komunikasi yang efektif, rekonstruksi kepercayaan, dan integrasi anak-anak dari pernikahan sebelumnya. Data dikumpulkan melalui purposive sampling, yang berfokus pada pasangan yang menikah ulang dalam tiga tahun terakhir dan memiliki anak dari pernikahan sebelumnya. Analisis data mengikuti pendekatan tiga tahap Miles dan Huberman: pengodean data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa adaptasi dilakukan melalui modifikasi perilaku, menjaga komunikasi, memahami perbedaan karakter, membangun hubungan dengan anak tiri, dan memperkuat ikatan dengan keluarga besar suami. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi masalah ekonomi dan perasaan terasing akibat sistem patrilokal, yang menekankan keluarga besar suami sebagai pusat hubungan kekeluargaan. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya strategi adaptasi dalam memperkuat keharmonisan rumah tangga bagi perempuan yang menikah ulang dalam konteks budaya Mandailing. Implikasi praktis mencakup panduan untuk meningkatkan komunikasi, membangun hubungan yang positif dengan anak tiri, dan mengatasi tantangan budaya guna meningkatkan ketahanan dalam pernikahan.

Kata Kunci: Pernikahan ulang, strategi adaptasi, budaya mandailing, sistem patrilokal.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a socially approved pattern through which two or more people form a family. Marriage involves not only the right to raise children but also obligations and privileges that shape societal dynamics (Horton and Hunt 1999). Remarriage refers to a marriage between new spouses after they have become widowed or divorced (Darminah 2022). Those who have experienced failure in previous marriages or lost their partners through death naturally feel strong social and economic pressures, leading some to choose remarriage (Maharani 2022). Remarriage can aid in personal adjustment, not only by providing a trusted companion for sharing and sexual partnership but also by improving economic welfare and happiness. Remarriage can guide individuals toward better self-adjustment and a more positive meaning in life (Praptiningsih, Hayat, and Yolanda 2021).

Someone who has married for the second time or more certainly experiences differences compared to their first marriage (Raley, R. K., & Sweeney, M. M. 2020). These complex relationship dynamics require a deep understanding of how all parties adapt to each other to establish good relationships between individuals and their environment (Deal, R. L. 2006). Remarriage without children from previous marriages is similar to first marriages. However, those who remarry bringing children from previous marriages face more complexity and require different forms of adaptation compared to their previous marriages (Henslin 2006).

Religious perspectives on remarriage vary widely. In Christianity, there are no exceptions for divorce, and it is firmly stated that anyone who divorces and remarries another person commits adultery, as does anyone who marries a divorced woman (Luke 16:18). Only death can be considered a legitimate reason for remarriage (Sinaga, Pelawi, and Sinambela 2022). In contrast, Islam permits previously divorced couples to remarry new partners, as explained in the Quran: "And when you divorce women and they have fulfilled their term, do not prevent them from remarrying their [former] husbands if they agree among themselves on an acceptable basis. This is instructed to whoever of you believes in Allah

and the Last Day. This is better for you and purer, and Allah knows and you know not." (Surah Al-Baqarah: 232).

In addition to religious perspectives, customs and culture also influence remarriage dynamics, especially in the Mandailing community, which is predominantly Muslim. Like in Islam generally, remarriage after the iddah period is considered legitimate and accepted. Nationally, there is no accurate data on remarriage rates in Indonesia. However, local data indicates that in 2024, there were 34 Mandailing women in Nagari Sungai Aur who remarried.

In Mandailing custom, traditional marriage law uses the *jujur* marriage form. *Jujur* marriage involves giving money or goods from the prospective husband's relatives (clan, tribe) to the prospective wife's relatives, marking the release of the bride from her father's customary law jurisdiction to join her husband's jurisdiction (Perrone et al. 2024). As a result of *manjujur*, the woman permanently remains within her husband's family environment, as do her children. The relationship with her original family is severed. If her husband dies, she continues to live within her husband's family environment. If she wishes to remarry, she must obtain permission from her husband's family (Ammar et al. 2023).

The Mandailing community in Nagari Sungai Aur also implements the *manjuju* marriage system, where wives generally live with their husband's family after marriage (*patrilocal*) (Sweeney, M. M. 2010). Additionally, because of the *patrilineal* kinship system, child custody is usually granted to the husband after divorce (Sim et al. 2024). Therefore, Mandailing women who remarry face more complex adaptation challenges as they must adjust not only to new partners but also to stepchildren and the husband's family. Based on the above description, it is interesting to study more deeply how Mandailing women adapt to remarriage.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the adaptation strategies of Mandailing women in remarriage. Qualitative methods allow for collecting and analyzing data in the form of words, behaviors,

and experiences, focusing on meanings rather than numerical representations (Afrizal, 2014). Specifically, the study adopts a phenomenological approach, aiming to uncover the essential meanings behind the experiences of remarried Mandailing women (Creswell, 2016).

Data Collection involved two primary techniques: in-depth interviews and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted as structured conversations between the researcher and the informants, aiming to gather detailed insights into their adaptation strategies. Meanwhile, observations allowed the researcher to directly examine informants' behaviors, attitudes, and interactions within their environments, providing additional context to the interviews (Patton, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection spanned approximately five months and involved 14 informants. This included nine primary informants Mandailing women navigating remarriage and five observer informants, individuals who had knowledge or observations regarding the adaptation patterns of these women.

For Data Analysis, the study employed the Miles and Huberman approach, consisting of three interconnected stages. First, during data codification, raw data from interviews and observations were transcribed and categorized into codes that reflected recurring themes. Next, in data presentation, the coded data were organized into meaningful categories to highlight patterns and relationships relevant to the research questions. Finally, in conclusion drawing, the researcher synthesized the findings to draw insights into the adaptation strategies and challenges faced by remarried Mandailing women (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The adaptation of Mandailing women who remarry in Nagari Sungai Aur is analyzed through the lens of George C. Homans' Exchange Theory. This theory aligns with economic principles, emphasizing the balance of profit and loss in social interactions. According to Homans, social actions are guided by considerations of rewards, which reinforce behavior, and costs, which deter it (Ritzer and Goodman 2018). Within this framework, social exchanges involve the mutual giving or

receiving of value-based resources, governed by specific social norms. This theoretical perspective provides a useful lens for understanding the adaptation strategies employed by remarried Mandailing women.

Individuals who remarry after a failed marriage or the loss of a spouse often enter these new relationships with positive expectations, hoping for rewards such as affection, happiness, economic security, and emotional support for their families. Interviews with primary informants revealed that Mandailing women primarily choose remarriage as a means to achieve stability and companionship, which they perceive as essential for rebuilding their lives. These findings illustrate how the theoretical concepts of rewards and costs manifest in the lived experiences of remarried women.

Forms of Adjustment after Remarriage

Adapting to New Habits

After remarriage, new habits typically emerge that differ from previous relationships. These habits can relate to various aspects, such as daily routines, communication styles, building intimacy, and conflict resolution. New habits usually adapt to current situations and conditions, including factors like age, previous experience, presence of children, and individual life principles. Several informants experienced significant habit changes after remarrying. Take, for example, HY, a 45-year-old woman who underwent a significant shift in financial management dynamics after remarriage. In her previous marriage, she was responsible for managing the household finances. However, in her current marriage, her husband has assumed this role. Initially, HY struggled with feelings of restriction, finding it difficult to adjust to her husband's control over financial matters. Over time, however, she began to appreciate his systematic and disciplined approach to managing their household economy, which ultimately fostered greater financial stability and mutual trust within their relationship.

Different experiences were reported by SN (29 years old) and RF (32 years old), who previously worked to support their households. After remarrying, both were asked by their husbands to focus solely on managing the household rather than continuing employment.

Adapting to new habits in remarriage requires balancing personal comfort with respecting partner decisions to strengthen harmony in the new household.

The transition to remarriage often brings about significant changes in daily routines and habits, requiring careful navigation of new relationship dynamics that differ markedly from previous marriages. These adaptations reflect not just personal preferences, but also the complex interplay of past experiences, current circumstances, and future aspirations of both partners. The process of establishing new habits becomes particularly intricate when considering factors such as different approaches to financial management, household responsibilities, and work-life balance, as exemplified by the experiences of several remarried couples in the Mandailing community.

The case of HY illustrates how financial management practices can undergo substantial transformation in remarriage. Her transition from being the primary financial manager in her previous marriage to accepting her new husband's control over household finances represents a significant adjustment in both practical and emotional terms. This shift required not only adapting to different financial decision-making processes but also developing trust in her partner's financial acumen. Over time, her initial resistance to this change evolved into an appreciation for her husband's systematic approach to managing their household economy, demonstrating how adaptability and open-mindedness can lead to positive outcomes in remarriage situations.

The experiences of SN and RF highlight another crucial aspect of habit adaptation in remarriage: the redefinition of professional and domestic roles. Their transition from being working women to focusing exclusively on household management represents a fundamental shift in their daily routines and personal identities. This change extends beyond mere schedule adjustments, touching upon deeper issues of personal autonomy, financial independence, and the redefinition of self-worth within the context of their new marriages. Their situations underscore how remarriage can prompt significant lifestyle changes that require careful negotiation between personal aspirations and marital harmony.

The process of adapting to new habits in remarriage often involves a delicate balancing act between maintaining individual identity and building a shared life with a new partner. This adjustment period typically requires both partners to examine their preconceptions about marriage, relationships, and domestic life, often leading to the development of entirely new patterns of behavior that differ from both partners' previous experiences. The success of these adaptations often depends on the couple's ability to communicate effectively about their needs, expectations, and concerns while remaining flexible and open to compromise.

The establishment of new habits in remarriage also frequently involves navigating relationships with extended family members and adjusting to different cultural expectations. This is particularly evident in traditional communities like the Mandailing, where cultural norms and family dynamics play a significant role in shaping marital relationships. The adaptation process must therefore take into account not only the immediate relationship between spouses but also the broader social and familial context in which the marriage exists, requiring sensitivity to cultural traditions while establishing new patterns of behavior that work for both partners.

The long-term success of habit adaptation in remarriage often depends on both partners' willingness to approach change with patience, understanding, and flexibility. As demonstrated by the experiences of HY, SN, and RF, initial resistance or discomfort with new habits can gradually transform into acceptance and even appreciation as couples work together to establish routines that accommodate both partners' needs and preferences. This process of mutual adjustment and compromise ultimately contributes to building a stronger, more resilient marital relationship that can weather the unique challenges faced by remarried couples.

Mutual Understanding of Different Personalities

Mutual understanding is particularly important in relationships where significant personality differences exist, as exemplified by RL (31 years old) and her husband. RL described having different personality traits from her husband - she is sociable and enjoys

having many friends, while her husband is quiet and prefers solitude in crowded places. Initially, RL admitted disliking her husband's personality. However, over time, she became accustomed to his nature and understood his conditions. Mutual understanding when facing differences can help avoid misunderstandings and enable both parties to adjust well in the relationship.

The foundation of a successful remarriage often lies in the delicate art of understanding and accepting personality differences between partners. This mutual understanding goes far beyond mere tolerance of surface-level traits; it requires a deep appreciation for how each person's unique character has been shaped by their life experiences, previous relationships, and inherent dispositions. The process of building this understanding becomes particularly crucial in remarriage situations, where both partners bring established personalities and behavioral patterns developed over years of adult life and previous marriages.

The case of RL and her husband exemplifies the complex dynamics of personality differences in remarriage. Their contrasting social orientations – her extroverted nature versus his introverted tendencies – represent a common challenge faced by many remarried couples. RL's journey from initial resistance to eventual acceptance of her husband's quieter disposition illustrates the transformative power of mutual understanding in bridging personality gaps. Her experience demonstrates how initial judgments about personality differences can evolve into deeper appreciation through patience and conscious effort to understand one's partner.

The process of adapting to different personality types in remarriage often requires a fundamental shift in perspective. Instead of viewing personality differences as obstacles to overcome, successful couples learn to see them as complementary traits that can strengthen their relationship. For instance, an extroverted partner like RL might learn to appreciate how their introverted spouse provides balance and stability to their social life, while the introverted partner might benefit from gentle encouragement to engage in social activities they might otherwise avoid.

Understanding personality differences also involves recognizing how these traits manifest in various aspects of daily life. In crowded social situations, for example, an introverted partner's need for space and quiet shouldn't be interpreted as rejection or lack of interest in their spouse. Rather, it should be understood as a necessary means of maintaining emotional equilibrium. This understanding helps couples develop strategies for managing social situations that respect both partners' needs and comfort levels.

The development of mutual understanding in remarriage also requires careful attention to communication styles. Different personalities often come with different ways of expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs. What might seem like clear communication to an outgoing person could feel overwhelming to someone more reserved. Learning to adapt one's communication style to match their partner's personality preferences becomes crucial for maintaining harmony in the relationship. This might involve the more talkative partner learning to appreciate comfortable silences, while the quieter partner makes an effort to share their thoughts more openly when important matters arise.

Time plays a crucial role in developing this mutual understanding. As demonstrated by RL's experience, the initial discomfort with personality differences often diminishes as couples spend more time together and learn to read each other's cues and responses. This gradual process of understanding involves countless small moments of observation, adjustment, and acceptance. Partners learn to anticipate each other's reactions, understand unspoken needs, and develop a shared language for navigating their differences.

The success of this mutual understanding ultimately depends on both partners' commitment to growth and acceptance. This involves recognizing that neither personality type is inherently better or worse – they are simply different approaches to experiencing and interacting with the world. When partners can embrace these differences while maintaining respect for each other's core personality traits, they create a stronger foundation for their remarriage. This acceptance allows them to build a relationship

that not only accommodates their different personalities but actually thrives on the unique combination of traits each partner brings to the marriage.

Maintaining Good Communication with Partner

Maintaining communication with one's partner is crucial in marriage, especially for those in remarriage. Good communication allows couples to share feelings, hopes, and concerns without feeling diminished. This way, both parties can build understanding and avoid misunderstandings that often become sources of conflict. ES (34 years old) shared that she and her husband frequently discuss their children, relationship, and family matters. They also discuss problems when they arise. RF (34 years old) added that communication in their relationship is well-maintained, with nothing hidden between them as her husband enjoys conversation and they always have topics to discuss.

Effective communication serves as the cornerstone of any successful marriage, but it takes on heightened importance in the context of remarriage where partners must navigate more complex emotional landscapes shaped by past experiences. The ability to maintain open, honest, and constructive dialogue becomes essential as remarried couples work to build trust and understanding while managing the unique challenges that come with blending families and reconciling different relationship histories. This delicate balance is exemplified by the experiences of ES and RF, who have cultivated strong communication practices in their remarriages.

The case of ES demonstrates how regular discussions about children, relationship dynamics, and family matters can strengthen the foundation of a remarriage. By creating a safe space for open dialogue about these crucial aspects of their life together, ES and her husband have developed a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives and concerns. Their proactive approach to addressing problems as they arise, rather than allowing issues to fester, illustrates how good communication can prevent minor disagreements from escalating into major conflicts. This practice of regular discussion helps both partners feel heard and valued,

contributing to a more stable and satisfying relationship.

RF's experience highlights another vital aspect of communication in remarriage - the importance of transparency and maintaining an ongoing dialogue about various aspects of life. The absence of hidden thoughts or feelings in their relationship, coupled with her husband's natural inclination toward conversation, has created an environment where both partners feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences freely. This continuous flow of communication helps build trust and intimacy, essential elements for a successful remarriage, while also ensuring that both partners remain connected and engaged in each other's lives.

The practice of maintaining good communication in remarriage often requires partners to develop new skills and habits that may not have been present in their previous relationships. This might involve learning to express emotions more clearly, becoming better listeners, or developing the ability to discuss difficult topics without becoming defensive. Partners must also learn to recognize and respect each other's communication styles while working together to find methods that work effectively for both parties. This process of developing shared communication patterns helps create a unique relationship dynamic that addresses the specific needs and circumstances of their remarriage.

Successful communication in remarriage also involves being mindful of timing and context when discussing sensitive issues. ES and RF's experiences suggest that having regular check-ins about various aspects of their relationship helps prevent issues from becoming overwhelming. This might include setting aside specific times for discussing important matters, creating routines for sharing daily experiences, and establishing guidelines for how to approach difficult conversations. Such structured approaches to communication help ensure that both partners feel secure in expressing their thoughts and feelings while maintaining respect for each other's boundaries.

The long-term success of communication in remarriage often depends on both partners' commitment to maintaining open dialogue even during challenging times. This involves

recognizing that good communication is not just about speaking but also about listening actively and responding empathetically to each other's concerns. As demonstrated by both ES and RF's experiences, when couples prioritize clear and honest communication, they create a stronger foundation for their relationship, enabling them to navigate the unique challenges of remarriage while building a deeper connection with each other.

Building Relationships with Stepchildren

Having children from previous marriages presents a challenge in the remarriage adaptation process. In Mandailing culture, which follows a patrilocal system where child custody is given to the husband after divorce, the adaptation process becomes more complex for Mandailing women who remarry men with children from previous marriages. SN (29 years old) experienced this when marrying a widower with three children living with them, while her own child from her previous marriage lives with her ex-husband. SN explained her initial difficulty adapting to her stepchildren, who were still young. In adapting to her stepchildren, SN followed their biological parents' parenting style to help the children become comfortable with her.

The process of building relationships with stepchildren represents one of the most delicate and complex challenges in remarriage, particularly within the patrilocal system of Mandailing culture. This cultural framework, which automatically grants child custody to fathers after divorce, creates a unique dynamic where women who remarry must often adapt to living with and nurturing their new husband's children while being physically separated from their own. This situation demands extraordinary emotional resilience and interpersonal skills as these women navigate the intricate balance of establishing themselves as caring parental figures while respecting the children's bonds with their biological parents.

SN's experience provides a compelling example of how Mandailing women approach these challenges in remarriage. Her situation of caring for three young stepchildren while being separated from her own child embodies the emotional complexity many women face in similar circumstances. The initial difficulties she

encountered reflect the common challenges stepparents face: establishing trust, building emotional connections, and finding their place within an existing family unit. Her conscious decision to adopt parenting styles familiar to the children demonstrates a thoughtful approach to creating stability and comfort in their new family dynamic.

The adaptation process in step-parenting often requires a delicate balance between establishing one's own relationship with the stepchildren while honoring their existing family bonds. For women like SN, this means developing an understanding of the children's established routines, emotional needs, and behavioral patterns while gradually introducing their own nurturing presence. This process becomes particularly nuanced in Mandailing culture, where traditional family structures and gender roles influence how stepmothers are expected to integrate into their new families. The success of this integration often depends on the stepmother's ability to respect these cultural norms while building authentic connections with their stepchildren.

An essential aspect of building relationships with stepchildren involves recognizing and adapting to each child's individual needs and personality. Even within the same family, children may respond differently to their new stepmother based on factors such as their age, temperament, and relationship with their biological parents. This requires stepmothers to develop a flexible approach to relationship-building, understanding that what works for one child may not work for another. The process often involves patient observation, gentle persistence, and a willingness to adjust one's approach based on each child's responses and comfort level.

The role of time and consistency cannot be understated in the development of step-relationships. As demonstrated by SN's experience, initial difficulties gradually give way to more comfortable and natural interactions as both stepmother and stepchildren become accustomed to their new family dynamic. This evolution requires sustained effort in maintaining consistent behavior patterns, showing reliable emotional support, and demonstrating genuine interest in

the children's well-being. The stepmother's ability to remain patient and persistent through this process, even when progress seems slow, often determines the long-term success of these relationships.

The uniqueness of each blended family situation requires stepmothers to develop their own approach while remaining mindful of cultural expectations and family dynamics. This might involve finding ways to honor Mandailing traditions while creating new family rituals that help bond the blended family together. Success in building these relationships often comes from maintaining a delicate balance between respecting the past and creating new shared experiences that help forge stronger family bonds. Through this process, stepmothers like SN can gradually establish themselves as valued and trusted members of their new family units, contributing to the overall stability and happiness of their blended families.

Maintaining Relationships with Parents and Relatives

In Mandailing's patrilocal culture, building close relationships with the husband's extended family is crucial. The patrilocal system means wives live in the husband's family environment, making harmonious relationships with the extended family essential for adaptation. SF (34 years old) shared that she frequently visits her sister-in-law, who becomes her confidante during conflicts with her husband, as she is her only refuge in her husband's village.

The patrilocal structure of Mandailing culture creates a complex social environment where women must carefully navigate relationships with their husband's extended family after remarriage. This cultural practice, which requires wives to integrate into their husband's family environment, places significant emphasis on building and maintaining harmonious connections with in-laws and relatives. The success of these relationships often determines not only the woman's personal comfort in her new environment but also the overall stability of her remarriage. The experience of women like SF demonstrates how crucial these family bonds become, particularly when adapting to life in a new village away from one's own family support system.

SF's close relationship with her sister-in-law illustrates the vital role that extended family members can play in providing emotional support and guidance during the adaptation process. By cultivating a strong bond with her sister-in-law, SF created a valuable support system within her husband's village, finding both comfort and counsel during challenging times in her marriage. This relationship exemplifies how women in patrilocal systems can strategically build alliances within their new family network, creating safe spaces for emotional expression and receiving advice from those who understand the family dynamics from an insider's perspective. The sister-in-law's role as a confidante becomes particularly significant given the cultural context where discussing marital issues with outsiders might be considered inappropriate.

The process of building these relationships requires careful attention to cultural norms and expectations while also developing genuine emotional connections. Women in Mandailing remarriages must often balance showing proper respect for family hierarchies while establishing their own place within the family structure. This might involve participating in family gatherings, showing appropriate deference to elder family members, and contributing to family responsibilities in culturally accepted ways. The development of these relationships often requires patience, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to learn and adapt to established family patterns and expectations.

The investment in maintaining strong relationships with extended family members can yield significant benefits beyond immediate emotional support. These connections can help women like SF better understand and navigate family dynamics, provide assistance during difficult times, and offer valuable insights into local customs and expectations. Moreover, having strong allies within the husband's family can help mediate conflicts, provide social protection, and facilitate better integration into the broader community. The success of these relationships often becomes a crucial factor in determining whether a woman feels truly accepted and supported in her new family environment after remarriage.

Adaptation Challenges

Economic Issues

Economic issues often present challenges in both first marriages and remarriages. These problems typically arise from lack of stable employment, income being less than expenses, or financial management issues. RL (31 years old) mentioned that her husband initially lacked stable employment, causing economic difficulties and requiring her mother's support for household needs, which led to tension in their relationship.

Economic challenges in remarriage often present more complex dynamics than those encountered in first marriages, as they involve navigating financial responsibilities not only for the new household but also potentially for children and obligations from previous marriages. The financial landscape becomes particularly intricate when couples enter remarriage with different economic backgrounds, existing debts, child support commitments, or varying approaches to money management. These differences can create tension and stress that may ripple through multiple aspects of the relationship, affecting both the immediate household and extended family relationships, as illustrated by RL's experience with her new husband's employment instability.

The case of RL and her husband demonstrates how employment instability can create cascading effects throughout the family system. When her husband struggled to maintain stable employment, the financial burden shifted unexpectedly to RL's mother, creating an uncomfortable dynamic where the new couple's economic survival became dependent on extended family support. This situation highlights a common challenge in remarriage - the delicate balance between maintaining financial independence and accepting necessary family assistance. The resulting tension in RL's relationship with her mother underscores how economic difficulties can strain not only the marital relationship but also crucial family support networks that couples often rely upon during times of transition.

Financial challenges in remarriage often require couples to develop sophisticated

strategies for managing both immediate and long-term economic concerns. These strategies might include creating detailed budgets, establishing clear communication about financial priorities, and developing contingency plans for periods of economic hardship. However, the implementation of such strategies can become complicated by each partner's previous experiences with financial management, their individual attitudes toward money, and the emotional baggage they may carry from financial difficulties in past relationships. The success of these strategies often depends on both partners' willingness to openly discuss their financial situations and work together to find solutions that address both immediate needs and long-term financial security.

The impact of economic stress on remarriage extends beyond purely financial considerations, often affecting the emotional well-being and power dynamics within the relationship. When one partner must rely on family members or the other spouse for financial support, it can create feelings of inadequacy, dependency, or resentment. These emotional responses to financial difficulties can be particularly challenging in remarriage situations where both partners may be striving to establish themselves as capable and independent contributors to the household. The experience of relying on extended family support, as in RL's case, can challenge both partners' sense of autonomy and adult competence, potentially creating additional stress in an already complex relationship dynamic.

The resolution of economic challenges in remarriage often requires a delicate balance of practical financial management and emotional support. Successful couples typically find ways to address immediate financial needs while working toward long-term financial stability, all while maintaining open communication and mutual support. This might involve making difficult decisions about employment, lifestyle adjustments, or accepting temporary assistance from family members, as RL and her husband experienced. The key to navigating these challenges often lies in maintaining a united front, where both partners work together to address financial difficulties while supporting

each other's efforts to contribute to the household's economic stability. This collaborative approach can help couples weather financial challenges while building a stronger foundation for their remarriage.

Residence Issues

In Mandailing's patrilocal system, women join their husband's family after marriage, leaving their original family. This presents a challenge in the remarriage adaptation process. MT (42 years old) initially lived near her husband's family but moved to her hometown due to their disapproval of the marriage. ES (34 years old) experienced discomfort living with her in-laws while bringing a child from her previous marriage, feeling her mother-in-law disliked her despite no explicit issues being raised. SF (34 years old) initially struggled living far from her family for the first time but gradually adjusted as she made friends in her husband's village.

The patrilocal residential system in Mandailing culture creates a unique set of challenges for women entering remarriage, as they must navigate not only a new marital relationship but also integration into an established family environment. This cultural practice, which requires women to leave their familiar support networks and join their husband's household, becomes particularly complex in remarriage situations where both partners bring previous marriage experiences and, often, children from prior relationships. The experiences of MT, ES, and SF illustrate the diverse challenges women face when adapting to these residential arrangements, ranging from family disapproval to feelings of isolation and the complex dynamics of living with in-laws.

MT's experience highlights how family disapproval can significantly impact residential choices in remarriage, even within the traditionally rigid patrilocal system. Her initial attempt to maintain proximity to her husband's family, followed by the decision to relocate to her hometown due to their disapproval, demonstrates how remarried couples sometimes must deviate from cultural norms to maintain their relationship's stability. This situation reveals the delicate balance between respecting traditional residential patterns and protecting the emotional well-being of the

newly formed family unit. The decision to prioritize personal comfort and marital harmony over strict adherence to patrilocal traditions reflects the evolving nature of cultural practices in contemporary Mandailing society.

ES's case illuminates the particular challenges faced by remarried women who bring children from previous marriages into their new residential situation. Her experience of perceived disapproval from her mother-in-law, despite the absence of explicit criticism, highlights how the presence of children from previous marriages can complicate the already challenging process of integrating into a new family environment. The subtle tensions and unspoken discomfort that characterized her relationship with her in-laws demonstrate how residential arrangements can become sites of complex emotional negotiations, especially when blending families across multiple generations under one roof. This situation becomes even more nuanced within the patrilocal system, where the expectation of harmonious integration adds additional pressure to an already sensitive situation.

SF's journey of adaptation represents a common experience among Mandailing women who must adjust to living far from their natal families for the first time during remarriage. Her initial struggle with the physical and emotional distance from her family support system, followed by her gradual adjustment through building new social connections in her husband's village, illustrates the importance of developing alternative support networks in the new residential environment. This process of adaptation demonstrates how women actively work to create new social bonds and support systems to replace the familial networks they leave behind, even while operating within the constraints of patrilocal expectations.

The varied experiences of these women underscore how residential arrangements in Mandailing remarriage often require significant flexibility and adaptation from all parties involved. Whether dealing with family disapproval, managing complex relationships with in-laws, or building new support networks, women must navigate these challenges while maintaining their own emotional well-being and that of their new family unit. The success of

these adaptations often depends on the ability to balance traditional expectations with practical needs, the support of their new spouses, and their own resilience in building meaningful connections within their new residential environments. These experiences suggest that while the patrilocal system continues to influence residential patterns in Mandailing remarriage, women and their families often find ways to modify and adapt these traditions to accommodate the complex realities of contemporary remarriage situations.

CONCLUSION

The adaptation process of Mandailing women in remarriage highlights the dynamic interplay between traditional cultural values and modern family dynamics. These women navigate complex challenges—such as adjusting to patrilocal living arrangements, balancing economic responsibilities, and fostering relationships within blended families—through resilience and emotional intelligence. Their strategies, including establishing new household routines, maintaining open communication, understanding personality differences, and nurturing bonds with stepchildren and extended family, showcase their remarkable adaptability.

Despite significant obstacles, these women successfully create stable and harmonious family environments by integrating traditional practices with contemporary needs. Their experiences emphasize the importance of flexibility, mutual understanding, and effective communication in sustaining remarriage relationships. More importantly, their ability to adapt demonstrates how traditional cultural frameworks can evolve to accommodate modern family structures while preserving essential values.

The success of these women's efforts not only ensures household harmony but also offers valuable insights into the broader potential for cultural evolution in addressing contemporary family challenges. This process underscores the role of adaptability in fostering sustainable remarriages and preserving the cultural

heritage of Mandailing communities in a changing world.

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