

Adaptation strategy of Indonesian people in southern Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract During the Covid-19 outbreak, lockdown regulations affected the mobility of Indonesians temporarily residing in southern Thailand. Most Indonesians in Songkhla, southern Thailand, at the time were unsure, homesick, and concerned about the situation. This occurrence caused Indonesian nationals to acclimate to the conditions, including Thai culture, while also dealing with an unpredictable situation. This study intends to investigate the difficulties they encountered, how they adapted to cultural differences in Thailand, and how they handled an unpredictable living situation. This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. Data collection techniques are based on in-depth interviews with nine informants, literature studies, and reviewing relevant articles from journals, news and websites. The results of the study showed that Indonesian citizens in Southern Thailand found problems related to 1) Thai language and letters, 2) homesickness, 3) fear of being infected with Covid-19, 4) less halal cuisine is available for Muslims, 5) Worrying reports in the media regarding the devastating effects of Covid-19. Their adaptation strategy is to 1) recognise the cultural parallels between Indonesia and Thailand, 2) Develop close relationships among Indonesians in Thailand and their family, relatives, and friends, 3) Think positively, as Covid-19 will soon be finished, and 4) Follow a new culture to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

Keywords: adaptation strategy; intercultural communication; southern thailand, covid-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Thailand had the least exposure to the coronavirus when the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020. According to Worldometers in Thailand, only 40 people died till 13 April 2020, 2,579 were infected with a 3% fatality rate, and 1,288 patients recovered. This is low mortality compared to Covid-19 instances in other countries such as Algeria, Italy, England, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Spain, where the percentage of

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deaths from COVID-19 is greater than 10% (Mulyasari, 2020). However, by mid-2020, all nations, including Thailand, were experiencing a rise in Covid-19 cases. When the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, many Indonesians were in Thailand for various reasons.

Thailand is a popular Asian destination for tourists, particularly Indonesians. Many Indonesians visit Thailand for holidays, study, or work. Indonesians are more inclined to visit Southern Thailand because, in addition to the beautiful environment, many people in Southern Thailand speak Malay and are Muslim. In 2020 when the Indonesian government enforced the lockdown policy or imposed restrictions on community activities, around 600 Indonesian citizens were in Southern Thailand. The Indonesian citizen was forced to refrain from living in Southern Thailand for a certain period until the lockdown policy in Indonesia was revoked, and Indonesian citizens residing abroad were allowed to enter Indonesia. The Indonesian citizens trapped in Southern Thailand came to Southern Thailand as tourists, business people, students, employees at companies, employees at the Consulate General of The Republic of Indonesia in Songkhla, and other Indonesian citizens who temporarily lived in Southern Thailand. These conditions made them necessary to adapt to the Thai people's culture during the Covid-19 pandemic (F. Sulaiman, personal communication, 6 November 2021). The Indonesian Consulate General in Songkhla stated that when the lockdown was over, 300 Indonesian citizens from Thailand managed to self-repatriate. Only about 300 Indonesian citizens live in Southern Thailand because they have already been permanent residents (F. Sulaiman, personal communication, 6 November 2021).

People who live in an area or country with different cultures, both in the short and long term, have the potential to experience obstacles. Cultural distinctions are seen not just in terms of language, traditions, and habits but also in terms of speaking styles, religions, and values. Understanding these cultural differences is essential so that communication between people of different cultures is effective and appropriate. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic brings problems for Indonesian citizens abroad during the lockdown.

On 25 August 2021, there were 71 Indonesian citizens infected with Covid-19 in Thailand, with details of 67 recovered, three stable, and one dead (Kamil, 2021). In general, at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in August 2021, there were 10,082 new cases of Covid-19 in Thailand. That condition has been Thailand's most significant daily additional case record since the Covid-19 pandemic. With this addition, the total number of Covid-19 cases in Thailand has increased to 391,989 since the pandemic's beginning (Perwitasari, 2021).

With the increasing number of people in Thailand infected with Covid-19, hospitals in Thailand were full and overwhelmed to accept patients infected with the coronavirus. Many Covid-19 patients have died. Covid-19 patients died at home and in hospitals, and even many patients were found dead on the streets of Bangkok City (Aco, 2021).

The increasing number of Thais infected with Covid-19 in hospitals and other health facilities has made Indonesian citizens in Southern Thailand even more worried and much-experienced stress. So, Indonesian citizens in Southern Thailand not only needed to adapt to Thai culture but also the worsening conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic at the same time.

Based on the above conditions, researchers are interested in analysing more deeply how Indonesians in Southern Thailand adapted to the cultural differences and conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Culture in the context of intercultural communication is interpreted as traditions and habits, as well as patterns of thought, language, speaking style, and religion (Febiyana & Turistiati, 2019).

Numerous scholars have studied cultural adaptation mechanisms in the past. Siagian and Tike (2019) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of the Indonesian diaspora regarding the cultural differences between Thailand and Indonesia and the cultural adjustments they made when interacting with Thai people. This study utilised Kim's Stress Adaptation Growth model to explain events in Indonesian and Thai intercultural encounters. The research technique is a qualitative study including nine participants: two Thais of Indonesian ancestry and seven Indonesians residing in Thailand: four employees and three students. The selection of participants utilised the approach of purposive sampling. Data were collected and analysed using theme analysis through interviews and document examination. The results reveal the perspectives and adjustments of the participants about Thai regulations, norms, and customs; religious aspects; sexual attitudes and behaviour; academic engagement; and linguistic issues. The results indicated that, despite encountering several cultural differences, the participants did not endure substantial strain during the adaptation process. In other words, the adaptation occurred with moderate ease (Siagian & Tike, 2019)

Concerning the process of adaptation, Cai and Rodriguez (1996) give a study on the Intercultural Adaptation Model (IAM) that describes the process of communication adjustment during initial cross-cultural contacts. This experiment aimed to demonstrate how individuals may or may not reach an understanding during their early intercultural encounters. In addition, IAM highlights how a person's prior intercultural experiences can aid or hinder their efforts to adapt when engaging with someone from a different culture. Furthermore, communication is critical in this intercultural process, as communicating with people from the new culture is extremely beneficial in breaking down barriers and gradually adjusting to the new culture (Alamri, 2018; Cai & Rodriguez, 1996)

Another strategy for cross-cultural adaptation is to examine communication breakdowns in intercultural interactions. In this situation, native speakers and non-native speakers miscommunicate. The comparatively varied linguistic histories of individuals complicate cross-cultural communication. If people perceive their discussion

partner is not a native language speaker, they are more likely to adjust their message early in the engagement than later. They argue that when people update their communications, they will initially modify lower-level aspects, such as speech rate and vocal intensity, rather than more abstract elements relating to the organisation and structure of the message content. This concept is known as the hierarchical hypothesis. However, contrary to their rationale, their findings indicate that this adaptation does not occur during early contact between individuals of various races. In other words, individuals do not alter their communications depending on their discussion partner's first appearance (Berger & Batista, 1993; Fakir, 2018). Tourism encounters can also be made more successful by developing cross-cultural strategies that effectively communicate the conscious feelings (emotions) and subtle impressions (affects) of locals to tourists (Martini & Vainio, 2022).

In Nara, Japan, students from Indonesia also implemented the adaption strategy. Interactions between Indonesian students and people of diverse cultural origins can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. The researcher uses phenomenological research to study the adaption mechanisms of Indonesian students in Nara. According to the findings of this study, the difficulties encountered by Indonesian students studying in Nara, Japan, are caused by internal and external factors. The process of adaptation is undertaken to overcome the challenges encountered. Adaptation occurs prior to and upon arrival in Japan. Religion, ethnicity, and the ability to speak the same language are the three primary aspects that help the transition of Indonesian students in Nara (Turistiati, 2019).

Research demonstrates that people from diverse cultural origins frequently experience interaction and communication difficulties. Therefore, companies must have the plan to deal with these issues. In contrast to prior research, the subjects of this study were Indonesian citizens in southern Thailand who implemented adaption techniques during the Covid-19 outbreak. The researchers utilised Stella Ting-Face Toomey's Negotiation Hypothesis, a distinct theory. In addition, intercultural communication ideas such as individuality vs collectivism, proxemics, monochronic vs polychronic, haptic, low and high context communication, the U-curve, and adaption strategy were employed by researchers.

Face-Negotiation Theory (FNT) predicts how individuals work face-to-face in a new culture. Face or look refers to the outward appearance of a person. This involves values such as respect, position, relationships, and loyalty. Facial works are human communication activities used to construct and defend one's looks and to construct, defend, and threaten the faces of others. This hypothesis combines study on cross-cultural communication, conflict, and courtesy. The notion of face-to-face negotiation expressly acknowledges that people from different cultures have distinct conceptions of the "face" of others. This condition causes

them to respond differently to conflict. The face is an extension of an individual's sense of self. It is an indispensable image in life. It is thought that self-image encompasses all facets of social life. The FNT also launched into an authoritative discourse on "face negotiation" problems (Gu et al., 2022; Oetzel et al., 2000).

Cultural diversity has a profound effect on how individuals communicate. Although the face is a universal idea, cultural variances exist. All civilisations need a face, but not all cultures equally manage this demand for a face. Faces, according to Ting-Toomey (2004), can be perceived in two ways: care for faces and the need for faces. Concern about faces is related to other individuals' faces. There are both self-interest and others' interests. For instance, when we encounter people from different cultures, we constantly want to maintain a professional demeanour and avoid offending others. At the same time, the demand for face relates to the duality between participation and independence. Some civilisations, for instance, do not like to rely on other people or cultures. Therefore appearances or faces that appear indifferent to others, as they are, are not altered to make others like or dislike, feel comfortable or uncomfortable.

The theoretical basis in this study is used by researchers in describing and discussing the phenomenon. These concepts and theories were chosen by considering their contribution to this research on the adaptation strategies of Indonesian citizens to cultural differences in Southern Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indonesian society is pluralistic, with diverse ethnic backgrounds, races, religions, languages, customs, habits, norms, and values. Regarding interacting and communicating with Thai citizens, Indonesians in Southern Thailand do not only communicate with people they already know or are familiar with. However, Indonesians also interact and communicate with unknown Thais or strangers.

The term "stranger" refers to those at the end of the continuum of unfamiliarity. Given a suitably alien context, anyone could be regarded as a stranger. A stranger has limited awareness of the rules and values of their new area. Moreover, the locals are unfamiliar with foreigners' ideas, hobbies, and habits. In general, communication with others requires expecting or forecasting their reactions. When communicating with a familiar person, people are typically confident in their predictions and may not even be aware that they do so. In contrast, while communicating with strangers, individuals are more cognizant of the variety of possible replies and the uncertainty of their expectations (Gudykunst, 2005)

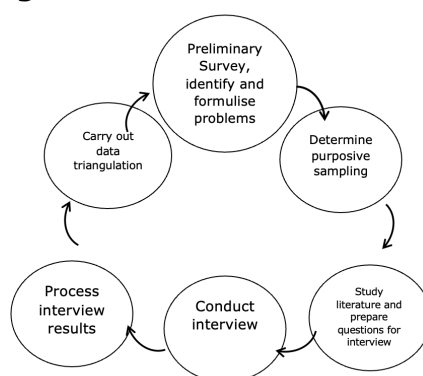
From the perspective of Indonesians living in Songkhla, the concept of a stranger in this study is a Thai who is relatively new to encounter in the context of intercultural communication. Because of their limited language skills and lack of exposure to communicating with people outside of Thailand, these strangers can be classified as Thais with significant cultural differences.

This study sought to analyse the difficulties faced by Indonesian citizens in Southern Thailand during the Covid-19 outbreak, how they adapted to cultural differences, and how they dealt with an unexpected living environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative research method using a case study methodology. In this study, researchers utilised both primary and secondary data. In-depth interviews with Indonesian citizens who resided in southern Thailand during the research period yielded primary data. Secondary data are processed and presented by the collectors of primary data or by other parties. The secondary data sources were documents, journal papers, mass media, and websites

Figure 1. Flowchart of the Research



Source: Adapted from (Cresswell, 2014)

The data-gathering method consisted of in-depth, interactive interviews and open-ended questions. The interview was unstructured, with the researcher selecting a list of discussion questions or topics. Researchers conduct document evaluations on documents or publications pertinent to the prior study and relevant notes. Documentation is correct data from a study, and researchers document all activities relating to research data, including interview documentation. The researcher used the data analysis technique and went through four stages, beginning with giving data, reducing or selecting data, displaying or presenting data, and drawing conclusions. The analysis of data is idiographic as opposed to nomothetic. According to idiographic analysis (Mulyana, 2018), the results of the investigation will neither be quantified nor generalised. The results of this study cannot be applied to all Indonesians living in Southern Thailand. This study methodology can be summarised as follows at Figure 1.

Researchers conducted a preliminary survey to obtain data by observing social media (Facebook) and the website of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, Songkhla, Thailand. Researchers interviewed the Indonesian Consulate General in Songkhla to confirm any information about Indonesian citizens stuck in Southern Thailand during the lockdown condition due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In

addition, researchers read news about Indonesian citizens in Thailand in general and Southern Thailand in particular regarding their conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Identification of problems. Based on the preliminary survey, researchers identified a problem that 600 Indonesians were unable or had difficulty returning to Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic. These conditions force them to stay and adapt to the cultural difference conditions in Thailand.

Determine purpose sampling. The researcher determined the purposive sampling of required informants. The specified informants answered research questions or problems. Characteristics of informants: 1) Informants were in Southern Thailand and could not return to Indonesia during the Covid-10 pandemic period 2020-2021, 2) Informants were Indonesian citizens who temporarily lived in Southern Thailand, 3) Informants did not have any objection to being interviewed, 4) Informants did not have any objection that their information would be published. For their convenience, some of the informants' identities are hidden. Based on the determined characteristics, there are five male and four female informants. Five of them are employees (working in Thailand), two female informants are housewives, and two female informants are university students.

Data collection. Data collection techniques are based on observation, in-depth interviews, literature studies, and related documents. Data collection comes from primary and secondary data.

Data processing. After the data is collected, the data is processed and analysed. Data analysis activities aim to give meaning. The meaning of the data helps solve problems in research that have been formulated. In a qualitative research design, data processing uses non-statistical techniques, considering that field data is obtained from narratives or words, not numbers.

The researcher's data analysis technique consisted of four stages: providing data, reducing or selecting data, displaying or presenting data, and drawing conclusions. Further, the interactive data analysis technique is explained as follows: 1) Data collection stage. At this stage, the researcher begins the initial classification process (in general). In this process, the researcher tracks, records, and organises relevant data to focus on the problem under study; 2) Data reduction stage. At this stage, the researchers conducted data selection, focusing on and simplifying data from all data obtained in the field. In this process, all data obtained from the results of in-depth interviews of researchers with informants, researchers' observations on the activities of informants are elaborated; 3) The stage of carrying out display activities or data presentation. The process of presenting data that has been reduced to a theme unit is then categorised; 4) The last stage, make a statement or conclusion. Conclusions made in this descriptive form can contribute to relevant parties or parties in need. The conclusions are also interpretive, meaning researchers interpret the data obtained and the

research results. Interpretation is also not subjective but objective because it is based on the data findings obtained and the results of interviews with research informants who can be held accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, many countries, including the Indonesian and Thai governments, implemented a lockdown policy. As a result, many Indonesian people abroad were detained and could not return to Indonesia. During that period, Indonesian people who were temporarily living in Southern Thailand for various purposes needed to adapt to the local culture, such as the diversity of customs and habits, religious rules and procedures, food, and new habits due to the Covid-19 pandemic such as lifestyle, daily habits in society, interaction and communication, and so on.

Indonesian citizens in Southern Thailand faced problems or challenges related to 1) the Thai language and letters, 2) homesickness because they could not return to Indonesia during the outbreak, 3) fear of being infected with Covid-19 due to unavailability of their relatives, expensive hospital fees, and fully occupied hospitals, 4) less availability of halal food for Muslims, 5) worrying news on the mass media about fatal effect of Covid-19.

The followings are challenges and adaptation strategies of Indonesian people to cultural differences in Southern Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic. They would be explained per sub-theme.

Fear of Being infected with Covid-19

The Thai population infected with Covid-19 was very high from June-August 2021 (Figure 2). Deaths due to Covid-19 also occurred not only in big cities like Bangkok but also in Southern Thailand. The health facilities in Southern Thailand were full of Covid-19 sufferers. Indonesians living in the Southern then were worried about being infected with Covid-19. The disease can be fatal. The fear of being infected by the coronavirus made people need to be closed to and surrounded by their families. The cost of medicines, vitamins, and health facilities is prohibitive. Excessive worries lowered the immune system of Indonesian people living in Southern Thailand.

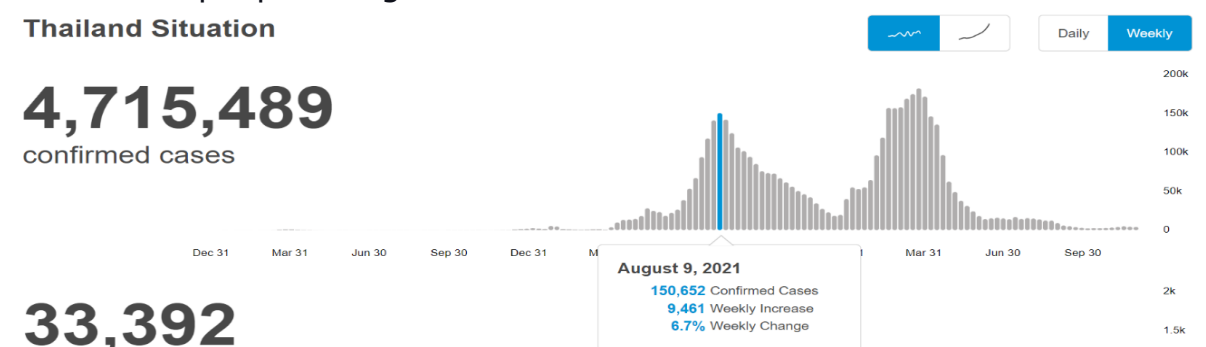


Figure 2. Thailand Situation of Covid-19 Pandemic
Source: (World Health Organization, 2022)

The pandemic condition became even more gripping because they could imagine if they got infected by a coronavirus. They had to be treated at a hospital or health facility. It would be difficult for them to communicate with doctors, nurses, or medical staff. They were concerned with the potential of misunderstanding communication because they did not understand the Thai language and Thai writing.

One of the Indonesian citizens found trouble when she was about to deliver her baby in Yala. She was refused to be in labour because she is Indonesian and had just returned from Indonesia before the lockdown was applied. The medical staff in the hospital was afraid of being infected with Covid-19. She was then referred to go to a public hospital. However, going to a public hospital was not that easy. They should have a connection with a doctor or internal staff. She finally could deliver her baby after being looked after by an Indonesian diaspora doctor.

Indonesian people are collectivist or together kind of people. They tend to live with family members, relatives, and neighbours. They tend to be homogenous. Wherever they are, especially in a place far away from home, such as in a foreign country like Thailand, they will try to find people from the same country—even more people with the same cultural background.

Thai Language and Letters

The Thai language, also known as Siamese, is widely used by the Thai population, including people in Southern Thailand. In general, they speak the Thai language. Unlike in well-known tourist areas such as Bangkok and Pattaya, the English language skills of the Southern Thailand people are limited. Although some of them understand English, they prefer to use Thai to communicate with foreigners, including Indonesian people.

The English pronunciation of Thai people is quite challenging to be understood by foreigners. Thus, most Southern Thailand residents are more comfortable using the Thai language. They hope newcomers in Thailand learn the Thai language to communicate with locals. Fortunately, Thai people in some areas, like Yala, Pattani, Songkhla, and Narathiwat, can speak Malay. It helped Indonesian people who could speak Malay to communicate with them. The Malay language is understandable by Indonesians, especially people from Sumatra. One of the informants who lived in Yala stated:

"Our family is from Medan, North Sumatra, so we understand the Malay language. We understand daily Thai language because I have been working here. We use Thai and Malay languages so we can communicate with local people of Thai. However, we do not understand any single word in Thai letters. It makes us difficult to understand any information written in Thai letters." (AZ, personal communication, 14 August 2022).

Indonesian people who have lived in Southern Thailand for quite a long time get used to Thai words. They lived in Southern Thailand due to work, education, and marriage. In many conditions, Indonesian people in Southern Thailand communicate and interact with local people. They can use the Malay language supported by non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, body language, or gestures when they cannot express their thoughts verbally.

Non-Thai people or immigrants often have difficulties communicating with Thai people regarding writing and reading. It is because the writing/letters used are difficult to understand. Thai people use Thai scripts in various information, announcements, food labels, mass media, etc. Although commonly, Thai scripts are referred to as the "Thai alphabet."

The script is an abugida, a writing system in which full characters represent consonants and diacritical marks for vowels; the absence of a vowel diacritic indicates an implied 'a' or 'o'. Vowels that follow a consonant in speech are written above, below, to the left or right of it, or a combination of those (Gnanadesikan, 2021).

Power asymmetries can impact how native speakers interact with non-native speakers in intercultural interactions. These disparities are not merely the product of differences in interlocutors' mastery of the language; they are related to the social construction and performance of each participant's identities (Liddicoat, 2016).

Homesickness

Many people living and detained in Southern Thailand must refrain from feeling homesick because of the constraints of the lockdown. They cannot go out of the country, even to other provinces. Those stuck in Southern Thailand alone can only interact and communicate with their family members, relatives, and friends via online communication such as through zoom meetings, video calls, and social media platforms.

Longing for home and family because people have been separated for so long drive them to homesickness. Homesickness is caused by discomfort and stress from different geographical locations and being far from home and family. Homesickness worsens when people feel lonely and unable to adapt to the local environment, culture, and language. Symptoms of homesickness operate on a spectrum ranging from mild to severe, with a potentially incapacitating impact on physical, cognitive, and psychological functioning (Fisher, 2017).

Homesickness is an emotional reaction when people are depressed while adjusting to a new environment. Some people experience depression, restlessness, and difficulty sleeping due to homesickness. Most of these symptoms have negative consequences for those who suffer from them. Homesick people experience various types of stress, including anxiety, loneliness, and discomfort; they may reject conditions in the new environment and prefer to return to their previous environment (Nejad et al., 2013).

Less Availability of Halal food for Muslims

The availability of halal food is one of the concerns for Indonesian Muslims. The Thai population, which is predominantly Buddhist, is used to eating foods such as those containing pork and other non-halal products for Muslims. Muslims must be careful and make sure the food they eat is halal.

In Southern Thailand, which borders Pattani, many Thai people are Muslim and sell directly and online. Many food ingredients such as fruits, vegetables, and natural products are halal, so those worried that their food ingredients are mixed or contain non-halal ingredients can be avoided.

Before the lockdown, when Indonesians could still return home, they frequently brought their favourite foods to Thailand. This allows them to stock up on food and avoid spending a fortune on Indonesian specialities in Thailand.

Mass media and social media play an important role in informing the increase of the death of Covid-19. The news published in newspapers, both online and in print, as well as television broadcasts, focuses more on the fatal consequences of Covid-19, such as death, full health facilities, deaths on the streets due to Covid-19, and lack thereof of drugs or vitamins that can help Covid-19 patients. Other than that, news focuses on the slow distribution of drugs and the minimal number of health workers due to exposure to Covid-19. The news made people even more worried. Excessive worry can cause the body's immunity to decrease and, as a result, are vulnerable to exposure to Covid-19. Some informants deliberately avoided watching the news on television or online to avoid anxiety about being exposed to the coronavirus.

Strategic Adaptation to Cultural Differences: Islam and Buddha in Thailand

Similarities between Indonesian and Thai Cultures. Thailand is one of the countries known as Buddhist since most of the population, around 95%, embraces Theravada Buddhism. The Muslim population is around 4% - 5%. Muslims are the second largest religious group in Thailand. The large Muslim population is in Southern Thailand provinces like Pattani, Yala, Songkhla, Narathiwat, and Chumphon. Muslims in Thailand are both ethnic Malay and Thai (Von Feigenblatt, 2010).

Buddhism heavily influences Thai culture. The position of the King of Thailand is very high and is highly respected by his people, especially King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died in 2016. Thai people firmly adhere to the culture that they realise in their daily lives. Their love for the country, the royal family, culture, and religion can be seen clearly in their behaviour and lifestyle. For example, the Thai people highly respect the King and his family. Offensive actions against symbols of the King, such as damaging a statue or stepping on his portrait, are criminal behaviour and can be prosecuted in court.

Another example is that Buddhist monks are respected people in Thai society. In public transportation, Buddhist monks must be treated with courtesy and respect, for example, by prioritising seats. In addition, individuals do not behave politely, such as not sitting with their legs crossed when in the presence of a monk. This shows that the Thai people highly uphold good ethics towards the people around them.

In some respects, there are similarities between Buddhist priests and how Muslims respect religious leaders or teachers. They must maintain a good attitude and manners. For example, students sit on the floor while the teacher sits on a chair or higher.

Thai and Indonesian people use their right hand when receiving or giving something. Thai people rarely shake hands. Indonesian, especially Muslim, rarely shake hands or even touch different gender. Buddhists do a '*wai*,' which is to close their hands in front of the chest. The head is the highest part of the body and must be respected according to Indonesian and Thai culture. Touching someone's head or hair is disrespectful.

In Thailand, Buddhism is perceived as a religion (Buddha) and a way of life. In this context, people do not have to embrace Buddhism but can follow how the Buddhist teachings are carried out in daily life. Many Buddhist teachings align with or are similar to the teachings of Islam or perhaps with other religions. For example, Islam teaches that women do not come into contact with men who are not mahram. Thai culture that follows Buddhist teachings does greetings without touching either the same sex or the opposite sex. Thai people do greetings by clasping hands on the chest, nose, or above the head. It depends on whom the Thai is greeting. The more a person is respected, the higher the clasped hands are raised. The point is that they do not touch. This custom can be accepted by Muslims who forbid contact with the opposite sex even though Muslims do not follow it as a whole. Muslims only put their hands together and keep them on their chests. This habit also follows the call for people not to make direct contact (touch) during the Covid-19 pandemic so that they are not infected with the coronavirus. Helping fellow human beings is something that is commanded by all religions. This is also reflected in the life and culture of the Thai people. Indonesians who live in Thailand feel helped by this attitude of help, even though Indonesian people's Thai language skills are minimal and Thai people have very minimal English skills.

Indonesians and Thais, in general, tend to be collectivist. Collectivism is a culture embraced by people who prefer to live in groups or gather or not live individually. At this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, a culture of help is needed. The realisation is in the form of giving each other information or strength for Indonesians infected with Covid-19, providing food and medicine assistance in the form of vitamins, helping to communicate between patients or patients' families with the health department, and others. This aligns with Hofstede's statement that Indonesia, with a score of (14) is classified as a Collectivist society. This

indicates a strong preference for a well-defined social framework in which individuals are expected to conform to the ideals of society and the in-groups to which they belong. One area where this is visible is the role of relationships in the Family (Hofstede, 2022).

Indonesian people feel comfortable communicating with Thai people through non-verbal that is shown. So even though Indonesians lack or do not understand Thai, Thai people's gestures and facial expressions can be interpreted as sincerity in helping.

The face is important to be aware of in communication since it can cause people to behave differently to "save face" when things are not going their way. This could take the shape of retribution, dispute, or insulting the other party. Understanding how to deal with both one's own and a communication partner's loss of face can help keep intercultural communication on track.

The above situation is in line with the statement of Ting-Toomey (2004) that when we meet people from other cultures, for example, we must always maintain a professional demeanour and avoid offending others. At the same time, the demand for face is related to the dichotomy of participation versus independence. Some civilisations, for instance, do not like to rely on other people or cultures. Therefore appearances or faces that appear indifferent to others, as they are, are not altered to make others like or dislike, feel comfortable or uncomfortable.

Building Intense Communication. Indonesian citizens detained in Southern Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic also received support from the Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia in Songkhla. They received a package of groceries containing rice, noodle, cooking oil, Vitamin C, etc. The consulate also carried out activities in the form of counselling on healthy living, eating Indonesian dishes to treat longing for relatives, holding recitation events for Muslims, etc. The support of the Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia in Songkhla helped Indonesian people in Southern Thailand cope with homesickness.

Communication between Indonesians, both in Thailand and in Indonesia, is compelling. The communication is personal through private channels such as personal Whatsapp and through groups. Communication content during the Covid-19 period has a lot to do with information related to the spread, prevention information, support between residents, and other content to encourage each other and shift focus from Covid-19 so that body immunity can increase.

Positive Thinking that Covid-19 will be over soon. The rise of precarious information about the Covid-19 pandemic in vulnerable communities has led to excessive anxiety. Stress arising from excessive anxiety during a pandemic will risk lowering the body's immunity. In addition to impaired immunity, excessive anxiety can cause symptoms similar to those experienced by Covid-19 patients. This symptom is a manifestation of anxiety, not a viral infection.

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic often makes many people feel confused, anxious, stressed, and frustrated. Covid-19 will be difficult to attack if the body has humoral immunity. Humoral immunity results from the activity of elements in the blood and lymphoid tissue, such as antibodies, not cells. This will be good if it is supported by suitable activities such as positive thinking. Positive thinking is the way how a person views, responds and perceives all events experienced by responding well and positively. Various studies show that positive thoughts affect the health of the body. These positive thoughts provoke the release of hormones helpful in increasing endurance, such as dopamine and serotonin (Rosa, 2022). Positive thoughts do not depend on the circumstances experienced. There are various ways to generate positive thoughts during a pandemic, including focusing on good things, being grateful, writing a daily journal such as retelling things you like and using a humorous approach such as through movies or reading books.

It is not only people exposed to Covid-19 who need to have positive thoughts. Positive thoughts have an essential role in life because people who have positive thoughts are happier than those who have negative thoughts. For these positive thoughts to be permanent in one's mind, one must understand and know oneself.

New Culture to Prevent Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in Southern Thailand undoubtedly impacts the community's social and cultural values, which impacts modifying people's mindsets, beliefs, and attitudes in everyday life. Wearing a mask at all times, diligently washing hands with soap, having hand sanitiser on hand, keeping a distance, avoiding crowds, avoiding physical contact with other people, and following numerous health regulations have all become routines.

Previously free social activities must now be carried out in accordance with health guidelines. Social activities like weddings, celebrations, thanksgiving, and entertainment had to be halted. The presence of a policy for the Implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) that is sustainable until the final level 4 PPKM forces the community to stay at home. Furthermore, this epidemic's impact has hit various sectors, including the economy and education. Buying and selling operations in traditional marketplaces were formerly unrestricted, but many sellers are now forced to close their doors. Teaching and learning activities in schools and colleges are also being compelled remotely or online by leveraging existing technology. This condition has only arisen due to the worldwide pandemic, which pushes all parties to comprehend, comprehend, and apply existing policies.

This pandemic has not only shaken up social aspects but has also resulted in changes in societal practices. Because of the growing number of Covid-19 cases, many people have gone "social media crazy." They are updated on the Covid-19 outbreak that has ravaged this country almost every time.

They utilise the internet or social media to keep up with current events and for school, college, and employment. This indicates that the community's culture has shifted from a previously non-virtual shift to a virtual society's culture, specifically people whose social activities are virtually utilising social media.

However, this pandemic has taught us a lot. The disruption of communal life and social activities must be positively addressed. After all, the most important thing is that we can be grateful for what happened by constantly preserving our health in order to avoid the coronavirus, which is currently wreaking havoc.

Because the global pandemic and the coronavirus have not yet vanished from our lives, what can be done is to live as close to the virus as possible without touching it and to try to accept the situation by always implementing health protocols and hoping that the global pandemic will end soon, so that the community's socio-cultural life can return to the previous order or even change into a better social order.

CONCLUSION

Indonesians temporarily residing in Southern Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown are experiencing difficulties. The difficulties stem from the Thai people's incomprehensible written language, homesickness, and fear of becoming infected with the coronavirus. They address this challenge by employing various adaption strategies, including identifying and emphasising the many cultural similarities between Indonesian and Thai cultures and conversing with Thais in Thai or Malay. Non-verbal language helps facilitate communication and overcome homesickness by communicating with family members, relatives, and friends online and offline as much as possible. They also convinced themselves that the Covid-19 pandemic would end soon so they could return to Indonesia and conform to the new culture to avoid Covid-19.

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