

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1. Summary of the Research

Based on the research that was conducted by the researcher titled The Dynamics of Javanese Women's Self-Adjustment to Committed Relationship with Western Men, the researcher concludes that self-adjustment is needed in a committed relationship, especially for intercultural or interracial relationship practitioners. Dayakisni and Yuniardi (2004) stated that people conduct different attitudes towards love, personal attractiveness, and marriage. There is no wonder that people who are in intercultural or interracial relationship experience conflict of intimacy and love expression.

There are some factors of self-adjustment to committed relationships. In this research, the researcher used the factors of self-adjustment to committed relationship stated by Hurlock (2008) and the principle of Javanese culture stated by Suseno (1984). The similar factors that the subjects and their partners have are:

1. The conception of an ideal partner. The subjects believe that their partners are ideal for them. These opinions are based on the requirement that they made by themselves based on their experience, such as having the ability to understand and respect each other in their relationship and conducting romantic behaviour to each other. However, the subjects emphasize on the communication between them and their partners.

2. Fulfilment of needs. SP and OC assume that being in a relationship with Westerners bring a financial benefit for them. This opinion is based on their financial condition. Both SP and OC are still college students. They both work as a part-time English tutor. EC emphasizes more in having a quality time with her partner.
3. Mutual interest. The subjects and their partners live watching movies during their free time. EC, OC and their partners share things they both are interested in, while OC and her partner share about teaching materials because they both are interested in English education.
4. Role concept. All the subjects on this research assume that the equal role in relationship is important but only EC and OC who actually implement it in their relationship. In SP's relationship, her partner is mostly the one who is more responsible financially in their relationship.
5. Similarity of value. All the subjects of this research see honesty as an important value in their relationships and assume that their partners agree with that. EC also emphasizes on openness, while OC sees communications is also important in her relationship.

There are also differences between the subjects and their partners. They are:

1. Background differences. As Javanese women, all the subjects have different backgrounds with their partners. Their partners are Dutch, Canadian, and American. These differences lead to the result of value which formed during lifetime.

2. Value differences. The subjects see religion and Javanese culture as a value in their lives although their partners do not agree with that. The subjects are struggling with the religion differences because it is considered as an obstacle to get married in Indonesia. The subjects seek for other options to get married without involving religion as a unifier, such as getting a legal married certificate in other countries. The subjects tend to combine the Javanese and Western culture although the output does not always meet the expectation from the society.
3. Lifestyle changes. The subjects developed some new behaviour since they were in a relationship with their partner as a result of acculturations of Javanese and Western culture.

The principle of Javanese culture stated by Suseno (1984) also played a high role in this research as the subjects of this research were born in Java and raised in Javanese society. The subjects tend to be very submissive and hide their feelings compared to their partners. They also realised that the result of this behaviour is being spiteful because they choose not to talk about their feelings and keep it for themselves instead. The conflict between the subjects and their parents is also because of the Javanese culture *bibit*, *bebet*, and *bobot* in terms of choosing a partner. Their parents prefer their daughters to have a relationship with Javanese men instead because of their cultural differences.

The process of self-adjustment to committed relationships with Western Men leads to two results, namely the effective self-adjustment and non-effective self-adjustment. The effective self-adjustment was seen from the accurate perceptions toward reality, the ability of the subjects to cope with stress and anxiety, to express their feelings and emotion, and the positive self-image that

the subjects have. Here is the explanation of effective self-adjustment that appeared:

1. Accurate perception towards reality. All the subjects have some achievable goals toward their partners, such as being engaged, getting married, and living together. Those goals are achievable because all the subjects and their partners have planned it. SP and her partner (R) plan to be engaged right after SP finishes her study. Although SP's parents have not known about their relationship, SP have built a good communication and relation with R's parents. They have talked about moving to the Netherlands and R's parents agree to be the sponsor to get the visa for SP. On the other side, EC and her partner (N) are already engaged and live together, while OC and her partner (M) are married. EC and N were planning to get married in Canada in 2020 but they have to postpone it due to covid-19. They are still waiting for the borders to open. After that, EC and N plan to stay in Semarang because they both work in Semarang. OC and M are planning to move to the United States. OC applied for a spouse visa, but they are still waiting for the borders to open and because the process of the visa takes about six to nine months.
2. The ability to cope with stress and anxiety. The way the subjects cope with stress and anxiety is by communicating with their partners, especially for SP and OC when they were in their parents' house. They tried to always keep in touch with their partners while also trying to solve their problems with their parents. OC after getting married and EC also try to get their quality time together with their partner as often as they can.

3. The ability to express the feelings and emotions. SP and OC tried to be opened about their feelings and emotions toward their partner although sometimes OC still hide her feeling that she does not feel comfortable because M still has some photos of people from his past relationships on Facebook.
4. Positive self-image. EC tend to be more confident than SP and OC in terms of appearance. EC also performs self-care behaviour, such as going to the gym and eating only organics products.

The process of self-adjustment also leads to some maladaptive behaviour such as:

1. Acculturative stress. The subjects tend to see the Javanese culture and their religion as obstacles to reach the happiness in their relationship with their partners. These are the reason why the subjects have an emotional conflict with their parents due to lack of family support in which lead to maladjusted behaviour, such as lying to their parents about their relationships. All the subjects also stop performing their religious routine.
2. Negative self-image. SP and OC often feel insecure about themselves because they think that there are more beautiful women who are better for their partners. But on the other side, they also have racism thoughts about Javanese men based on their past relationship experiences. All the subjects assume that Western men are better than Javanese men in terms of relationship. They think Western men see their personality instead of physical appearance.

3. Bad interpersonal relationship with others. Besides all the family problems, the subjects tend to overthink about what people think about them because of having a committed relationship with Westerner men.
4. Inability to express feelings and emotions. EC and OC tend to prevent conflicts by hiding what they really feel toward her partner's behaviour that she did not like. While on the other side, SP is more open about her feelings toward her partner. She tend to openly talk to her partner about what she does not like.

During the process of self-adjustment, the subjects get a support from other people, including their partners. Their partners are very supportive. R and M always encourage SP and OC to finish their studies, while N supports EC in her fashion business. Besides that, SP and EC also got supported by their friends that they knew from Instagram who are eventually also in a relationship with Westerners. OC and M are not very active on Instagram but still got supported by EC and N, and their mixed-married friends.

EC and OC are now supported by their family although OC had to experience a rejection from her parents and older brother before they got married. On the other side, SP still hides her relationship from her family. She is planning to talk about her relationship to her parents only after she finished her study.

Non-effective self-adjustment to committed relationships force the subjects to conduct some new behaviour to adjust to their relationship and reduce their inner conflicts. All the subjects try to compromise and understand their partners' behaviour. They also try to be more open toward their partners and communicate their problems in relationships. SP and EC also perform a new healthy lifestyle,

such as doing some sports and diet in order to gain their confidence. Besides that, the subjects tend to convince their partners to perform certain behaviour that they prefer.

The process of self-adjustment leads to some achievements. All the subjects found inner peace after communicating their feelings and emotions toward their partners. EC and OC have achieved one step closer of becoming an ideal couple. EC and N have engaged and stayed together, while OC and M have married and are planning to move to the United States. They also now have better interpersonal relationship with their friends and families. On the other side, SP and R have not reached the same achievement.

In order to understand the dynamics of subjects' self-adjustment, the researcher has made a figure 5.01 as mentioned below.

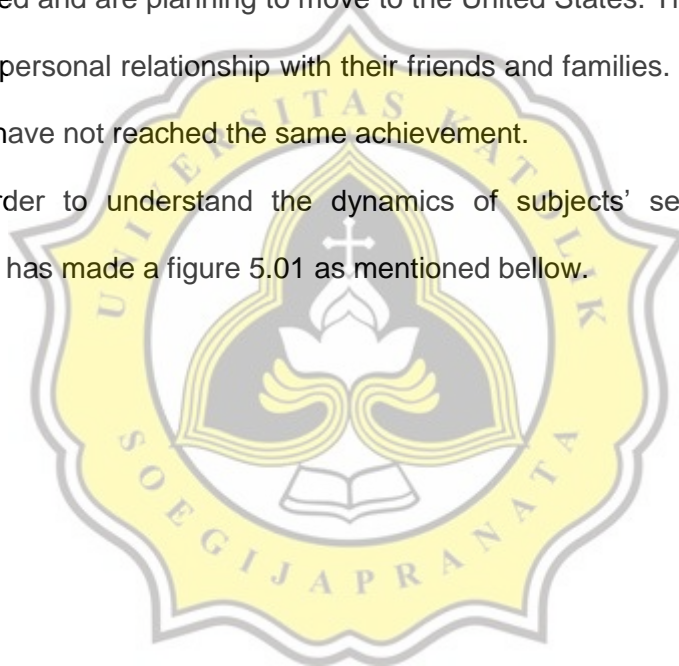
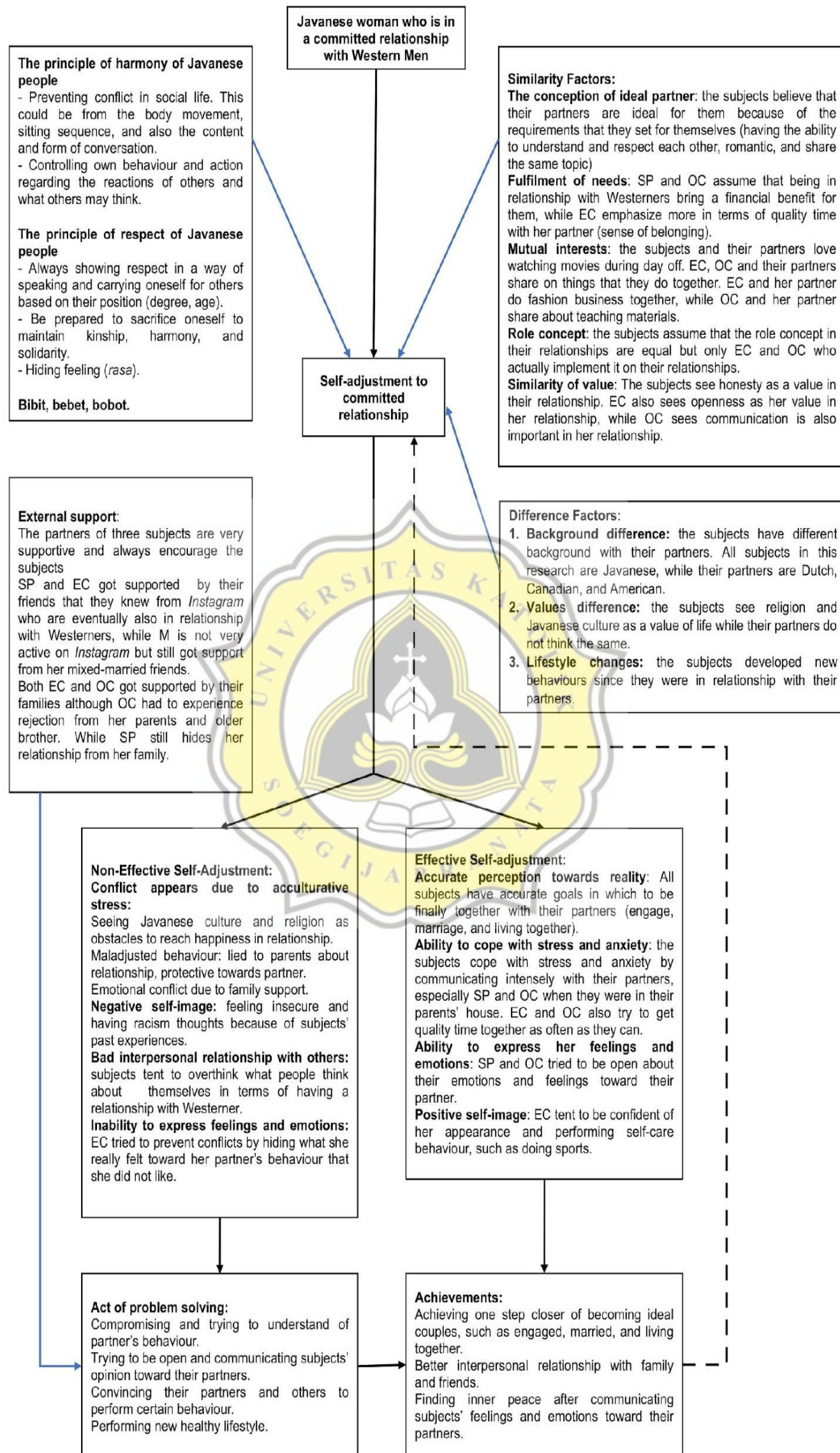


Fig. 5.01 The Dynamics of Subjects' Self-Adjustment to Committed Relationship with Westerners based on the result of the observation and interview with three subjects.



5.2. Discussion

Romano (in Venus, 2013) stated that the tendency to have intercultural relationship is getting stronger in the twenty first century. This is due to the increasing frequency of people traveling, moving, attending school, or working abroad. In addition, the role of social media makes it easier for people to build connections without being limited by the distance. Social media also allows individuals to build a relationship with other individuals personally.

Dayakini and Yuniardi (2004) explained, the differences in intercultural relationship will lead to certain problems and issues. That is why people who are involved in intercultural relationship experience conflict of intimacy and expression because people from different cultures show different basic emotional expression. Peres and Schrift (Venus, 2013) further explained, in order to achieve the satisfaction in intercultural relationship, people who are involved in intercultural relationship need to be flexible, compromise, able to negotiate the differences, and also commit to the relationship that they are having.

The findings of this research is that self-adjustment in a relationship is affected by some factors such as Javanese culture and some stated by Hurlock (2008), namely the conception of ideal partner, the fulfilment of needs, the similarity of background, the mutual interests between couple, the similarity of values, the role concept in a relationship, and the lifestyle changes.

Cultural differences have brought a severe implication to marriage life. Cultural difficulties can be seen from the differences of behaviour, tastes, habits, an also the ways of communicating and expressing themselves. Couples who are united by commitment or marriage are not enough to only rely on love, but also must understand and respect the differences in values, belief systems, and

family tradition. Shortly, each partner must be good at sharing their background and expectations (Venus, 2013).

Pervious study by Canlas, Miller, Busby, and Carroll (2015) in Asian-American couples about interracial relationship outcomes found that interracial couples have lower degree in terms if relationship stability because of the cultural and value differences, as well as lack of support from family and friends. This study is consistent with the fact that not only for marital outcomes, but also the interracial dating couples were 11% more likely to break up compared to same-race couples. Chow, Furtado & Theodoropoulos (in Canlas, Miller, Busby & Carroll, 2015) also stated that there is an unspoken understanding between couples who share a common background. However, this conclusion is not particulary true for same-race Asian couples because culturally, Asian shows less affectionate expression. Asian couples tend to stay married even though they experienced low level of marital satisfaction and stability because they value strong kindship system and mutual obligation.

Based on the observation and interview with three subjects of this research, having committed relationships with Westerners is not easy to bear with. There are cultural differences that the subjects had to experience in their relationship and it does not stop because as stated by Schneiders (1960) that self-adjustment is a process when the individuals react to the demand of themselves and the situation that they are going through. Self-adjustment is affected by some factors that forced the subjects to adjust themselves to their partner in a relationship. Their background differences that may lead to value differences as well and lifestyle changes due to assimilation. Likewise explained by Hurlock (2008), the more similarities that individuals have, the more convenient for individuals to

adjust to each other. This explanation also applies to differences in values that are owned by the subjects and their partner.

However, the consideration to adjust oneself to a mixed-culture relationship is not only affected by background, value, and lifestyle changes. The subjects of this research also see Javanese principles as one of the factors to be adjusted in a relationship. There are two principles of Javanese culture in which explained by Suseno (1984) namely:

1. The principle of harmony expected the subjects to prevent any conflict in their social life. This could be from any body movement, sitting sequence, and also the content and form of conversation. That is the reason why the subjects have the difficulty to talk about their feelings and emotions to their partner to prevent further conflict although this behaviour often leads to inner conflict within the subjects themselves. The Javanese principle of harmony also forced the subjects to control their behaviour and action regarding to the reactions of others and what other people may think about them. That is the reason why the subjects are demanding for other people opinion than their partners in terms of relationship.
2. The principle of respect in which expects the subjects to always showing respect in a way of both speaking and carrying themselves, be prepared to sacrifice themselves to maintain the harmony, and trying to hide their feelings as it is seen as high artistic value. This is why the subjects tend to be more submissive and hide their feelings compared to their partners.

Sharma (2016) explained that in order to be able to adjust successfully in the society, individuals perform assimilation and accommodation then the problem will rise when the socio-psychological needs are not fulfilled and often

leads to maladjusted behaviour. These factors above lead to acculturative stress during self-adjustment that forced the subjects to perform certain behaviour that can be classified as adjusted and maladjusted behaviour as stated by Yusuf (1991). Maladjusted behaviour is defined by the American heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary (Singha and Bhattacharjee, 2016) as an inability to react successfully to the demand of individual's environment. This maladjustment can be seen when the individuals are unable to satisfy their psychological, biological, and social needs and establishes an imbalance between their personal needs and expectations of the society (Magal in Singha and Bhattacharjee, 2016). These maladjusted behaviours performed by the subjects lead to negative behaviour, such as inability to express feelings and emotions while, adjusted behaviour lead to the ability to cope with stress and anxiety, and more positive self-image.

There are positive results of self-adjustment in this research, namely the accurate perceptions toward reality which are built during the subjects' adulthood, the ability to cope with stress and anxiety, the ability to express feelings and emotions, and positive self-image. In a way of expressing feelings and emotions, SP and OC are more open to their partners comparing to EC. EC tends to prevent conflicts by hiding what she feels towards her partner's behaviour. This behaviour is aligned with the Javanese culture in terms of maintaining harmony and respect in which requires Javanese to always hide their feelings and emotions as stated by Suseno (1984) that individuals must be willing to compromise and not to obtain their full rights to prevent conflict that may appear in their society. EC was usually more contextual compared to EC, where she

tend to use parts of a conversation to clarify the meaning instead of being straightforward.

The subjects in this research see the Javanese culture and religion as obstacle to reach the happiness in their relationship although religion is seen as a value of life especially in Indonesia. That is why their SP and OC's parents do not agree that if their daughters marry people who are not religious. This is also the reason why the subjects find it difficult to marry Western men because married in Indonesia is seen as a religious ritual and based on the parents' approval.

In terms of interpersonal relationship with other people, subjects tend to overthink about what other people said to them in terms of having a relationship. Since Javanese is considered as collectivist in which means that the needs of individuals are strongly expected to be closed to one another with the result that being "different" can be easily seen in their society. As stated by Jariya (2012) the culture of community shared values, understanding, assumption, and goals that are learnt from older generations. There is a possibility that this point of view about Westerners is learnt from older generations and affected the process of decision making among younger generations, including choosing a life partner. Choosing a life partner in Javanese culture is mostly controlled by the parents which may lead to acculturative stress. This situation shows that decision making is almost non-existent among Javanese women. The subjects tend to see that Javanese culture and religion as obstacles to reach happiness in their relationship. These obstacles could lead to maladjusted behaviour, such as hiding their relationship from their families due to lack of support from their families.

This situation above forced the subjects to develop some new behaviour in order to adjust to the situation and solve the problem. In this research, the subjects tend to choose to compromise the differences between themselves and their partners. This condition is aligned to the Javanese principle stated by Suseno (1984) that individuals are expected to accept and compromise to prevent conflicts. As a result, the subjects became vindictive and tend to bring up all the thoughts they have been keeping whenever they argued.

There comes the time when the subjects realised that keeping all the bad thoughts inside without communicating it with their partners gave a bad effect to their relationship. From this situation, the subjects learnt to be more open and communicate their opinions and/or disagreements toward their partners. Besides that, the subjects often try to convince their partner to perform certain behaviour expected by the Javanese society. The subjects also perform healthier lifestyle in order to cope with their physical insecurities.

This act of problem-solving was supported by the partners themselves. Since the population of mix-culture relationship doer is very wide and everywhere, the subjects met some other Indonesian women through social media who are also in a relationship with Westerners. The subjects told the researcher that they were very supportive of each other. However, the previous study by Leslie and Letiecq (in Dainton, 2015) stated that social support from others is not a strong predictor of interracial marital success. According to that, interracial relationship should function very much the same as same-race relationship.

Based on this research, in order to step out of the maladjusted behaviour, the subjects need external support from their surroundings, such as their

partners, family members, and other people who are facing the same problem. These supports lead to the action of problem solving which then bring some achievements in their relationship with their partner. As an achievement, the subjects could be one step closer to becoming an ideal couple. Some subjects are now engaged and married although another one is still stuck in the process of problem-solving. The subjects also have better interpersonal relationships with their families and friends.

Based on this research, the subjects also found inner peace after communicating their feelings and emotions towards their partners. Previous study by Dainton (2015) found that the maintenance of communication used by individuals in interracial marriage has brought relationship satisfaction. This study is also aligned with the research by Adeagbo (2016) that effective communication, trust and equity brought stability and satisfaction in interracial relationship in gay couples in South Africa.

Harber and Runyon (1984) stated that there are two concepts of adjustment. There are adjustment as a state and adjustment as a process. In this research, the researcher chose self-adjustment as a process in the subjects because being in a relationship is an on-going process of learning. This explains why the dynamics of self-adjustment in a committed relationship leads back to the circle of the process of adjustment.

5.3. The Limitation of the Research

In conducting this research, the researcher realised there are some limitation and weaknesses in which can be considered affected the result of this research, they are:

1. The weakness of the measuring instrument, such as lacking of item in behavioural checklist and interview guide.
2. The schedule of the observation and the interview. The interviews were only conducted twice for each subject. The researcher also did some observations when the researcher met the subjects accidentally without taking any note.

