

Satisfaction of Long Distance Marriage Couple

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Abstract

Long-distance marriage is when marriage couple living separately for various reasons and one of them is work. Typically, affecting couple's complaint of marital dissatisfaction. This study uses a qualitative and descriptive approach to analyze marital satisfaction of long-distance marriage couples. The subjects were 4 housewife selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific aspects (characteristics), specifically a couple who are having a long-distance marriage for approximately 1 year. Data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the data were analyzed through four stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that subjects 1, 2, and 3 felt satisfied in a marriage relationship except subject 4, who was dissatisfied. There were no difficulties in the four subjects' relationships with their partners because they were able to communicate effectively. Moreover, all of them could solve problems and cope well with the household economic situation. This study imply that the involvement of a counselor is essential in providing subjects with a variety of approaches. The therapeutic communication between counselors and subjects, in particular LDM couples, can be used to provide services to others.

Keywords: Marriage Satisfaction, Long Distance Marriage, Family Counseling

Abstrak

Menjalani kehidupan *long distance marriage* seringkali harus meninggalkan keluarga, terutama istri dan anak di rumah karena alasan pekerjaan. Tidak jarang, dampak dari *long distance marriage* menjadi salah satu keluhan ketidakpuasan pernikahan yang dirasakan pasangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deksriptif yang bertujuan untuk menganalisis kepuasan pernikahan pasangan *long distance marriage*. Subyek penelitian ini adalah 4 orang ibu rumah tangga dengan teknik *purposive sampling* berdasarkan kriteria/karakteristik tertentu diantaranya pasangan suami istri yang memiliki pernikahan jarak jauh yang signifikan selama ± 1 tahun dan akan menjadi subjek penelitian dengan menandai persetujuan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi dan wawancara secara semi terstruktur. Kemudian, data dianalisis melalui empat tahap yaitu pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Adapun hasil dalam penelitian ini diantaranya *pertama* subyek 1, 2 dan 3 merasa puas menjalin hubungan berbeda dengan subjek 4 yang tidak puas dengan pernikahannya; *kedua*, komunikasi dengan pasangan yang dialami oleh keempat subyek secara keseluruhan tidak mengalami kendala karena bisa saling memahami; *ketiga* secara keseluruhan keempat subyek dapat menyelesaikan permasalahan yang dialami secara baik; *keempat* secara sosial ekonomi, keempat subyek dapat mengatasi dengan baik situasi ekonomi rumah tangga. Oleh sebab itu, pentingnya keterlibatan konselor untuk membantu subyek dengan berbagai macam pendekatan konseling sangat dibutuhkan, misalnya pelayanan dalam rangka membantu sesama yang dilakukan dalam bentuk komunikasi *terapeutik* antara konselor dengan subyek khususnya bagi pasangan yang LDM.

Kata Kunci: Kepuasan Pernikahan, Long Distance Marriage, Konseling Keluarga



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INTRODUCTION

Every married couple craves happiness and satisfaction in marriage (Handayani & Harsanti, 2017). However,

not all can achieve marital satisfaction (Soraiya et al., 2016), therefore, they cannot create a happy family (Rozalinda & Nurhasanah, 2014). Marital satisfaction is an

individual subjective evaluation of the overall marriage quality (Kisiyanto & Setiawan, 2018). Furthermore, it is unidirectional with the overall subjective satisfaction (Rumondor, 2013). Fowers & Olson stated that marital satisfaction consists of 14 aspects, including Idealistic Distortion, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Marriage, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, Religious Orientation, Marital Cohesion, and Marital Change (Fowers & Olson, 1989). Marital dissatisfaction can be manifested when these aspects are not fulfilled (Kisiyanto & Setiawan, 2018).

The study conducted by Sari et al. (2018) stated that early adults experience marital satisfaction in all aspects, with the highest subjects in the high to very high category (Sari et al., 2018). In recent years, many studies have been conducted to show the essential components of marital satisfaction, which is an important part of mental health for individuals and families (Canel, 2013). Particularly, couple interaction patterns have been found to have a significant impact on marital satisfaction, as evidenced by numerous theoretical and empirical studies. Ideally, marriage creates intimacy, friendship, fulfillment of sexual desires, unity, and emotional development of partners (Papalia et al., 2009). However, based on the male and female perspectives, the most common problems arise in marriage are money, communication, sexuality, and family problems. It was reported that this problem worsened due to changes in the family life cycle (Canel, 2013). Therefore, when a husband and wife are unhappy in their marriage, the family's harmony will suffer. Amelia et al. (2018) explained that even many married couples choose to divorce

when experiencing problems in their relationship (Amalia et al., 2018).

Widyanisa et al. also stated that one of the causes of divorce is the practice of long-distance marriage (Widyanisa et al., 2018). This is defined as a situation in which the couple lives in different locations during the working day, sometimes for an extended period of time, for professional reasons (Mcbride & Bergen, 2014). For many couples, this is a necessity because of the pressures of today's high-competition job market, which forces them to live apart after marriage (Mijilputri, 2015; Purwanto et al., 2019; Widyanisa et al., 2018). In this case, they experienced many household problems (Rachmawati & Mstuti, 2013) caused by not fulfilling their common needs (Fatimah, 2018).

In a long-distance marriage, it is not always easy to maintain a relationship. It is the same as a married couple living and encountering many problems together, such as stress, feeling lonely, anxiety, lack of communication, unstable emotions, and doubts about their partner (Stallford, 2005). Communication issues between partners are even more critical because they do not live together, lack support when making a big decision, work that interferes with time to be together and lack of ego strength (Handayani, 2016). Therefore, misunderstandings occur and often look disharmonious (Lestari, 2012).

METHODS

Present study is qualitative descriptive research aim to analyze marital satisfaction of long-distance marriage couples. Qualitative approach used to examine social or humanitarian issues in depth (Creswell, 2015). Table 1 shows that four women as housewives were selected based on specific criteria/characteristics, including married couples who had been in

a significant long-distance marriage for about a year, and have given their consent to participate. The data was collected

through observation and semi-structured interviews.

Table 1. Study Subjects

Subject (Initial)	Gender	Age	Occupation
AP	Female	28 years old	Housewife
S	Female	31 years old	Housewife
SHY	Female	30 years old	Housewife
W	Female	26 years old	Housewife

The data were analyzed in four stages, *first*, data collection was carried out through observations and interviews which guidelines generated based on the aspects of marital satisfaction. *Second*, data reduction refers to selecting, focusing, simplifying, separating, and transforming raw information. The reduction process takes place after data collection. *Third*, presentation of data is the organized collection of information that allows conclusions to be drawn and actions to be taken. Historically, narrative text has been a common method of presenting data in a visually appealing manner (Miles & Huberman, 1992). This condition will aid in conducting additional research based on relevant understanding. *Fourth*, conclusion (verification) is conducted by noting and giving meaning to interviews, memos that have been written, the extent and completeness of data processing, as well as experience.

RESULTS

Four subjects was interviewed in depth about their satisfaction with a relationship, conflict resolution, and socioeconomic conditions.

Relationship Satisfaction

In this case, subject 1 explained, *"I am delighted because my partner prioritizes their children and me."* This means that

subject 1 is satisfied, as well as subject 2, who explains, *"Yes, ma'am, I am satisfied with my husband's behavior because he is kind."* Likewise, with subject 3, *"I am delighted because my partner prioritizes me."* In contrast to subject 4, he says, *"I have not been satisfied because I want to be like other families they are always together, often sad when they see neighbors who gather with their husbands at home. But what can I do? My husband works outside the city, hence I accept it; maybe his sustenance is there."* This means that subject 4 does not feel satisfied with the marriage.

Communication with Spouse

In this case, subject 1 explained, *"as earlier stated, alhamdulillah, I feel comfortable because he knows the right time and condition to give news."* As long as it can be effectively conveyed to other parties, the issue with Subject 1 is not serious. Likewise, subject 2 stated, *"Yes, like what you said earlier because the communication was smooth, alhamdulillah, I felt comfortable."* Furthermore, subject 3 gave similar reply, *"I am very comfortable communicating with my partner because he knows when the time and atmosphere is right."* Meanwhile, subject 4, with the initial W, said, *"I am happy when my husband calls and pays attention to me and my children. But I am not happy because I cannot meet my*

husband.”. Overall, the research subjects feel that the relationship with their partner is fine with communication.

Conflict Resolution

In this case, subject 1 explained, *“When there is a conflict, my partner talks about it at the right time and condition, and if we have a small problem, at least we will be fine again.”* This means that the problems that occur in subject 1 can still be adequately resolved because they can understand each other. Likewise, subject 2 through his statement, *“My husband is very open to me, whatever the problem is, he always talks. when we have a conflict, we’re ready to fix it right away.”* This is also felt by subject 3, *“By listening to and respecting each other.”* Additionally, subject 4 *“Usually this is resolved over the phone.”* This means that the subject can solve the problems maybe through telephone.

Socio-Economic

In this case, subject 1 explained, *“Not presently, but at the beginning of my marriage, I was a little worried because my partner had just started a business, and now Alhamdulillah, we have savings for our children’s school fees later as well as other emergency conditions.”* Meanwhile, subject 2 explained that, *“The majority of the time, my husband is willing to transfer his paycheck to me when the financial situation is the same. Provisions for kids’ needs, cooking, and daily snacks will be made in due course.”* Furthermore, subject 3 *“Not currently, but at the beginning of my marriage I was a little worried because my partner had just started a business.”* Subject 4 stated that *“there is no economic problem, Alhamdulillah it is enough.”* The statement submitted does not have socio-economic constraints

because the spouses can manage the economic conditions in the household.

DISCUSSION

Long-distance marriages tend to lower the level of togetherness, making difficult to build intimacy. This can affect the perceived marital satisfaction (Handayani, 2016). Excessive jealousy may be a contributing factor to marital dissatisfaction in long-distance couples (Scutzwahl et al., 2011) (Billeter, 2002). Prameswara & Sakti explained that long-distance marriage is considered difficult for some people (Prameswara & Sakti, 2016) due to the situation of being separated (Pistole et al., 2010).

There is a sense of contentment in the relationships of subjects 1, 2, and 3, unlike subject 4. *Second*, There were no hiccups in the partners' communication because they could understand one another. *Third*, The subjects are adept at resolving issues, whether in person or over the phone, without raising a fuss. *Fourth*, They can manage economic conditions in the household.

Relationship Satisfaction

A long-distance marriage did not bring happiness to subject 4, in contrast to 1, 2, and 3 (LDM). Hurlock explained that a happy husband and wife would produce satisfaction from the efforts made together (Hurlock, 1980). The satisfaction of a couple's marriage is positively correlated with the existence of a balance. These results indicate that the influence of role balance is bidirectional in couples (Chen & Li, 2012). The resulting influence is positive or unidirectional, meaning that the ability of married couples to regulate their emotions is directly proportional to the satisfaction.

However, when their emotional control is poor, their level of satisfaction is also low (Wulan & Chotimah, 2017).

Communication with Spouse

Communication between subjects 1, 2, 3, and 4 during a long-distance marriage was unproblematic because they were able to understand each other.

Compromise can also be used as an opportunity to improve communication between partners. Individual attention is one of the variables in maintaining a happy relationship (Sari & Fauziah, 2016). Furthermore, According to Scannell (2010), the characteristics of successful conflict resolution include the husband's ability to relate with the wife, trust, and the ability to monitor feelings, as well as to see the differences between the two of them (Dewi, 2012). Effective communication creates extraordinary relationships emphasizing quality, openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality (DeVito, 1997).

Conflict Resolution

A long-distance marriage allowed subjects 1, 2, 3, and 4 to resolve their issues without causing a fuss. Muhid et al. Found a significant impact between conflict resolution on the fulfilment of husband and wife (Muhid et al., 2019). To maintain a marriage, couples need to pay attention to their ability to deal with conflict. To have a long-lasting relationship, conflict should be dealt with constructively. Conversely, when the couple engages in destructive conflict resolution, they are likely to be dissatisfied (Greff & Bruyne, 2000). The loss of trust can lead to a feeling of distrust and make married life difficult (Walgito, 2010).

Socio-Economic

Socio-economically, subjects 1, 2, 3, and 4 can manage the economic condition in the household during the long-distance marriage.

In one of the studies, Izadi-avanji et al. explained that income has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction unlike work (Izadi-Avanji et al., 2019). Furthermore, marriage satisfaction may be affected by the implementation of family tasks. It was found that families who are able to conduct development tasks well have a significant impact on raising marital satisfaction (Rahmaita et al., 2016; Tyas et al., 2017), especially for long-distance marriage couples.

In this regard, the level of marital discord and the low level of marital satisfaction are often tested to determine the risk of IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) relationships (Sackett & Saunders, 1999), such as problems related to decision making, management, and the use of finances (Kisiyanto & Setiawan, 2018). Several factors certainly influence the satisfaction obtained by a long-distance marriage. Some of the elements that can uphold the fulfilment of marriage are in the form of past qualities and present attributes. Past attributes recall joy for parental marriage, discipline, closeness, adequate sex instruction from guardians, youth, and training, while current qualities incorporate sexual life, fulfilment with home, family salary, level of equality, correspondence, public activity, articulation of warmth as well as trust (Soraiya et al., 2016).

Various counseling methods are used to help individuals articulate their social lives (Rangka, 2016). Working in the community as a counselor necessitates an understanding of the various types of counseling that can be provided (Diniaty, 2013). As a form of restorative

correspondence between counselors and individuals, community counseling serves as a service to others. Using concrete examples of thoughts, feelings, and mentalities, the advisor will assist and lead their client into a discussion about the issues in their environment and how they are responding to them (Alexander, 2019). The well-known family counselling approaches are experiential, behavioural, structural, strategic, solution-focused, and narrative. This implies that counsellors who conduct family counselling take an approach oriented to experience, behavior, structure, strategy, solution focus, and narrative (Diniaty, 2013), especially for long-distance marriage couples.

CONCLUSION

Marital satisfaction refers to the mental state of a married couple in evaluating their marriage to meet their needs, hopes, and goals that influence the happiness in marriage couple. Specifically, in long distance marriage couple who separated for specific reasons such as work, this study revealed that first, subjects 1, 2, and 3 felt satisfaction in a relationship, contrasting to subject 4. Second, the subjects' communication with their partners was error-free because they were able to understand one another. Third, they can effectively resolve problems for example over the phone, without causing further problem. Fourth, the subjects can manage household finances well. Furthermore, the counsellor's involvement in helping subjects with various approaches is needed in the counselling context. For instance, services are provided to assist others through therapeutic communication between counselors and subjects. Family counseling is conducted using an approach based on experience, behavior, structure, strategy, solution focus, and narrative.

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