

The Relationship Between Effective Communication and Marital Satisfaction in Wives in The First Ten Years of Marriage

Ramaryllis Chesylia Monalu¹, Malida Fatimah²

{190810397@student.mercubuana-yogya.ac.id¹, malida@mercubuana-yogya.ac.id²}

Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta

Abstract. The early years of marriage represent a crucial adjustment period for couples. Marital satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality of their marital relationship. Effective communication is presumed to play an important role in enhancing marital satisfaction. This study aims to examine the relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction among wives within the first ten years of marriage. The research method employed is quantitative with purposive sampling, involving 163 participants. The instruments used were the Marital Satisfaction Scale and the Effective Communication Scale, which were adapted and developed by the researcher. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson Correlation. The results indicate a significant relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction with a significance value of 0.669. The findings of this study may guide couples in strengthening marital harmony and satisfaction and is expected to contributed to academic references in the fields of developmental psychology.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Effective Communication, Wives

1 Introduction

The early period of marriage is a very important and fundamental period, which determines the desire for future married life [1]. The early phase of marriage of one to ten years is a critical period where various life transitions occur such as changes in status from single to married, changes in privacy, actions in decision making, financial conditions, and the presence and care of children [2]. The beginning of marriage is a period of adjustment that must be gone through by every couple [3], if there is dissatisfaction with the partner, this can cause conflict that will threaten the marriage, even with the worst possibility of divorce [4].

According to Lavner et al. [5], even couples with initially high marital satisfaction may end up divorcing. This underscores the impact of poorly managed marital dynamics on long-term relationship quality. Ten years of marriage age greatly indicates the sustainability of a marriage. Decreased marital satisfaction can lead to divorce at the age of ten years of marriage [6]. This indicates that the first ten years of marriage are a critical period for a couple to maintain harmony and increase marital satisfaction.

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, marriage is a social culture where women and men commit to a relationship where sexual relations are declared legal and partners can be

responsible for each other [7]. Marital satisfaction is an important factor in maintaining the harmony of a marriage. Fowers and Olson [8] define marital satisfaction as a subjective feeling of the quality of a marriage as assessed by various criteria. In accordance with the definition proposed by Olson, DeFrain, and Skogrand [9] marital satisfaction refers to the emotional evaluation made by spouses regarding the overall quality of their marital relationship.

Several studies have shown that wives tend to experience lower satisfaction than husbands, especially in emotional integrity and roles in marriage [10]. Papalia and Olds [11] emphasize factors that influence marital satisfaction include the quality of communication, age at marriage, personality, religious beliefs, parental upbringing, emotional maturity, commitment, economic stability, presence of children, relationships with extended family and friends, and leisure activities outside of daily routines.

Communication plays an important role in marriage, without effective communication it will be difficult to maintain a strong marriage relationship. Canary and Stafford [13] define effective communication as actions taken to maintain relationship harmony to create success between partners. The first ten years of marriage which is still considered beginning, really needs intimacy which plays an important role in forming effective communication as a foundation for the process of living together where husband and wife understand their respective roles and functions in the family. Balanced reciprocity in communication is also the key to increasing satisfaction in marriage [14].

The results of a study conducted by Humaira [15] on Interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction in newly married couples with a marriage duration of 6 months to 5 years show that marital satisfaction is highest in the first year of marriage, with husbands reporting higher levels of satisfaction than wives. Widyarini et al. [16] emphasized that effective communication greatly contributes to a lasting marriage relationship. Devito [17] stated that effective communication will produce dominant human relationships that emphasize the quality of openness, sympathy, support, positive state of mind, and equality. According to Harahap and Lestari [18], the more effective the communication, the more harmonious the relationship between husband and wife. Effective communication is not necessarily seen from how intense the communication is, but rather from how partners show attention to each other, particularly how the wife pays attention to her husband, ensuring continuous communication is maintained.

Data can also show that dissatisfaction in marriage can contribute to the increasing divorce rate in Indonesia. In 2023, the Supreme Court [Directorate General of the Religious Affairs Agency] reported that there were 408,347 divorce cases [19], with 251,828 divorce cases caused by disputes and quarrels [20]. Amato and Hohmann-Marriot [12] in their research revealed that divorce can be triggered by dissatisfaction in marriage that occurs repeatedly.

Previous studies have revealed that communication plays a crucial role in fostering marital satisfaction and harmony, both among newly married couples and those in longer marital durations. Marital satisfaction tends to be higher during the early years of marriage but begins to decline as couples approach the tenth year, which is often considered a critical stage in marital life. This study, however, specifically focuses on the relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction among wives in the first ten years of marriage, thereby providing a novel contribution to enriching the understanding of marital satisfaction dynamics during this critical period.

Previous studies have focused on various aspects of communication, ranging from the influence of popular culture, the general conceptualization of effective communication, newly married couples, to the critical ten-year period of marriage. This study, however, focuses on the relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction among wives in the first ten years of marriage, thereby offering a new contribution to enriching the understanding of marital satisfaction dynamics within this critical period.

2 Literature Review

Marital Satisfaction is an individual subjective evaluation of their marital relationship which pertains to various criteria contributing to marital satisfaction, such as happiness, harmony, mutual household agreement, and the quality of interpersonal treatment between spouses [8]. Sayehmiri et al. [21] define marital satisfaction as a mental state that cannot be achieved directly but requires continuous effort from spouses, especially in the early years of marriage when satisfaction can be unstable and potentially threaten marital stability.

Rahmananda, Adiyanti, and Sari [6] suggest that marital satisfaction refers to an emotional evaluation made by individuals regarding their marital relationship. Olson, Defrain, and Skogrand [9] define it as the emotional state experienced by spouses when assessing the overall quality of their marriage. This sense of satisfaction typically involves a comprehensive evaluation that encompasses multiple aspects of the relationship. Similarly Meri [4] describes marital satisfaction as an individual's assessment of their marital condition, which may reflect their level of optimism about the relationship or a combination of satisfaction derived from various dimensions of marital life.

Fowers and Olson [8] identify ten essential dimensions in marriage that contribute to the development and enhancement of marital satisfaction: communication, personal issues, egalitarian roles, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and marriage, family and friends, and religious orientation. Furthermore, Papalia and Olds [11] emphasize factors that influence marital satisfaction include the quality of communication, age at marriage, personality, religious beliefs, parental upbringing, emotional maturity, commitment, economic stability, presence of children, relationships with extended family and friends, and leisure activities outside of daily routines.

Communication is an interaction expressed symbolically, conveyed through language and adhering to established norms, the language used must be understandable, accurate, honest, and appropriate [22]. According to Canary and Stafford [13], effective communication is an action performed to maintain harmony in a relationship as desired, with the aim of achieving success between spouses. Effective communication is the activity of conveying information to one's spouse, understanding what is communicated, and maintaining the relationship [23]. Aligned with the definition stated by DeVito as cited in Pangaribuan [24], effective communication results in dominant interpersonal relationships that emphasize qualities such as openness, empathy, support, positive mindset, and equality.

Canary and Stafford [13] identify several aspects of effective communication. Positivity, which refers to behaving well and being pleasant to spouses. Openness, defined as mutual transparency between spouses regarding their thoughts and feelings. Assurance, which involves maintaining a strong sense of commitment within the relationship. Social networking, referring to nurturing the relationship by building and sustaining good connections with family and friends. And sharing task, which involves maintaining the relationship through a responsible division of roles and responsibilities between spouses.

Effective communication contributes significantly to enhancing marital satisfaction, particularly during the first ten years of marriage. Communication refers to the process of conveying messages through symbols such as words, images, numbers, and other forms [25]. According to Harold Lasswell in Caropeboka [26], effective communication comprises several components, the communicator, the message, the medium, the recipient, and the resulting effect of the communication process. Within the context of marriage, effective communication can promote greater intimacy and mutual understanding between spouses [27].

Effective communication is recognized as a key determinant of marital satisfaction among wives particularly during the first ten years of marriage. According to Canary and Stafford [13], effective communication influences marital satisfaction through positivity, which refers to friendly behavior, attentiveness, creating a warm atmosphere, reducing conflict, and enhancing overall marital happiness [28]. Openness involves emotional transparency with the aim of strengthening emotional closeness and increasing marital satisfaction [29]. Assurance serves as an expression of love and provides a sense of security regarding the future of the relationship [30]. Social networking includes maintaining social connections that reinforce the couple's emotional bond [8][31]. Sharing tasks refers to taking on roles and responsibilities in household duties fairly, thereby enhancing the sense of equity within the relationship especially in the first ten years of marriage [13][32].

Effective communication between couples plays an important role in preventing and resolving problems in marriage such as arguments, conflicts, and infidelity. The first ten years of marriage represent a critical period that determines the longevity of the relationship. A decline in marital satisfaction during this period may increase the risk of divorce [6]. Effective communication is not merely a matter of frequency, but rather how couples show mutual attention amid their daily routines [18]. Communication skills also assist couples in addressing conflict, managing psychological differences, and facing emotional challenges such as hormonal changes experienced by wives [33][34].

3 Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with data collected using psychological scales. The subjects of this study are wives who have been married for 1 to 10 years. Two measurement scales are used, the marital satisfaction scale and the effective communication scale, both employing a four-point Likert scale. Participants are instructed to complete the questionnaire within 10 to 15 minutes. All responses are collected anonymously and treated with strict confidentiality, solely for research purposes. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis.

3.1 Instrument

The marital satisfaction scale consists of 10 items. Respondents are asked to answer items that assess various aspects of marital satisfaction, including communication, personal issues, egalitarian roles, financial management, conflict resolution, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and marriage, family and friends, and religious orientation. The effective communication scale comprises 15 items, from which respondents are asked to respond to 15 items measuring five dimensions: positivity, openness, assurance, social networking, and shared tasks.

The scale was then adapted and developed based on the marital satisfaction scale from Fowers & Olson [8] and the effective communication scale from Saputri [35]. Validity was assessed through professional evaluation, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha with a reliable value of greater than or equal to 0.600. Examples of items on the marital satisfaction and effective communication scales include “When I get married, I will accept my husband's opinion even if it differs from mine” in the conflict resolution aspect and “My husband and I are open with each other about any situation” in the openness aspect.

3.2 Subject of the Research

The subjects of this study consisted of 163 wives whose length of marriage ranged from 1 to 10 years. The subjects was obtained by purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting participants based on specific criteria [36]. This criteria for subjects in this study were wives with a marital duration of 1 to 10 years. This technique was employed because the subject criteria had been predetermined by the researcher, ensuring that all participants met the established requirements.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of this study used Pearson Correlation. It is because the researcher want to measure the correlation between the independent variable which is effective communication, and dependent variable which is marital satisfaction.

4 Result

This study was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires for data collection, resulting in a total of 163 wives as a subject, each with a marital duration ranging from 1-10 years

Table 1. Distribution Of Study Subject Based On Length Of Marriage

Duration [Years]	Frequenc y	Presentation [%]
1-3	73	44,79
4-6	49	30,06
7-10	41	25,11
Total	163	100%

In table 1, the majority of respondents were in the 1-3 years of marriage category, totaling 73 subject or 44,79%, then respondents with 4–6 years of marriage, totaling 49 individuals or 30.06%, and respondents with 7–10 years of marriage, totaling 41 individuals or 25.11%.

The assumption test is conducted first before the hypothesis test is conducted. The normality test employed was the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with a significance value (Sig) of 0.000, indicating that both variables are normally distributed.

The result of the linearity test in this study indicate that the variables of effective communication and marital satisfaction have a significance value of $p=0,000$. If the significance value <0.050 then there is a linear relationship between the two variables. Based on these results, the assumption test is fulfilled and the analysis can proceed to the hypothesis test.

Table 2. Hypotesis Test Result

Variable	Sig.	Correlation	Description
Marital Satisfaction			
Effective Communication	0,000	0,669	Significant

From table 2 it can be seen that the result of the correlation coefficient analysis between effective communication and marital satisfaction are $p=0,000$ ($p \leq 0,05$). These results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction. This indicates that the hypothesis is accepted, the better the communication between spouses, the higher the marital satisfaction. Conversely, poorer communication between spouses is associated with lower level of marital satisfaction.

5 Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence of a significant positive relationship between effective communication and marital satisfaction among wives in the first ten years of marriage. This indicates that the more effective communication is associated with greater marital satisfaction, whereas less effective communication tends to be associated with lower levels of satisfaction. The acceptance of the hypothesis in this study indicates that effective communication is a factor positively correlated with marital satisfaction.

The result of this study conducted by Haris and Kumar [37] also revealed a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and communication. This suggests that the more effective the communication between spouses, the greater the level of satisfaction within the marriage. Conversely, ineffective communication is associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. In other words, communication plays a pivotal role in the quality and stability of marital relationships.

Hananiah and Sanjaya in their study [38] reported a significant positive relationship between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction among couples engaged in long-distance

marriages. Notably, 75% of the participants in this study were women in the role of wives. This finding suggests that the more effective the interpersonal communication, the higher the level of marital satisfaction experienced by wives in long-distance relationships.

The results also align with the findings of Pandey and Neelam [39] confirm that the ability to communicate effectively has a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction. This implies that when communication is conducted effectively, marital satisfaction tends to be high. Conversely, ineffective communication is associated with lower levels of satisfaction within the marital relationship.

According to Buehler and Well as cited in Nyarks and Hope, communication is a fundamental form of interaction within a relationship that enables individuals to express a wide range of meanings. Given the diverse ways in which people communicate, couples often anticipate differences that can make communication more dynamic and engaging. Effective communication skills are positively correlated with marital satisfaction and are considered essential for achieving happiness in marriage [27].

The acceptance of the research hypothesis is further substantiated by the coefficient of determination (R^2), which was found to be 0.448. This indicates that 44.8% of the variance in marital satisfaction can be explained by effective communication. The remaining 55.2% may be influenced by other factors not included in this study.

6 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that effective communication has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction among wives during the first ten years of marriage. The better the communication between spouses, the higher the level of marital satisfaction. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for couples, especially women planning to marry, on how to build a healthy marital relationship to achieve harmony and satisfaction in marriage. The result of this study are expected enrich academic discourse and serve as a reference for future research in the field of psychology. Furthermore, this research can be expanded by incorporating other factors that may influence marital satisfaction.

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