

Marriage Satisfaction As Seen In The Openness Of Wives Undergoing A Long Distance Marriage

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Article History:

Submission

Accepted

Published

Sept 30th, 2025

Apr 1st, 2026

Apr 25th, 2026

Abstract. *This study aims to examine the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in couples who are in a long-distance marriage (LDM). The phenomenon of LDM is increasingly common due to rising social mobility and economic demands, presenting unique challenges to the sustainability of marital relationships. Using a quantitative correlational approach, this study was conducted on 26 female respondents who were in LDMs. The research instruments consisted of two scales: a marital satisfaction scale with 40 items and a self-disclosure scale with 32 items, both measured using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was performed using Pearson's correlation test with the assistance of SPSS software. The results of the analysis indicate that both self-disclosure and marital satisfaction among respondents are in the high category. More specifically, the dimensions of emotional openness and life perspective scored relatively higher compared to openness in religious aspects. In terms of marital satisfaction, the dimensions of communication and emotional intimacy were the most dominant, while the aspects of financial management and division of household roles were relatively lower. The correlation test yielded a value of $r = 0.624$ ($p = 0.001$), indicating a significant positive relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. These findings confirm that the more open couples are in expressing their feelings and personal values, the higher their marital satisfaction, even when separated by distance. The results of this study have practical implications for marriage counselors and related institutions to encourage emotional and spiritual communication openness as an adaptation strategy for LDM couples.*

Keywords: openness, marital satisfaction, long-distance marriage.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji hubungan antara keterbukaan diri dengan kepuasan pernikahan pada pasangan yang menjalani Long Distance Marriage (LDM). Fenomena LDM semakin banyak ditemui seiring meningkatnya mobilitas sosial dan tuntutan ekonomi, sehingga menghadirkan tantangan tersendiri bagi keberlangsungan hubungan pernikahan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional, penelitian ini dilakukan pada 26 responden istri yang menjalani LDM. Instrumen penelitian terdiri dari dua skala, yaitu skala kepuasan pernikahan yang memuat 40 item, serta skala keterbukaan diri dengan

32 item, yang keduanya diukur menggunakan skala Likert lima poin. Analisis data dilakukan dengan uji korelasi Pearson melalui bantuan program SPSS. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa baik keterbukaan diri maupun kepuasan pernikahan responden berada pada kategori tinggi. Secara lebih rinci, dimensi keterbukaan emosi dan pandangan hidup memperoleh skor relatif lebih tinggi dibandingkan keterbukaan dalam aspek agama. Pada kepuasan pernikahan, dimensi komunikasi dan keintiman emosional menjadi yang paling dominan, sedangkan aspek manajemen finansial dan pembagian peran rumah tangga relatif lebih rendah. Uji korelasi menghasilkan nilai $r = 0,624$ ($p = 0,001$), yang mengindikasikan adanya hubungan positif signifikan antara keterbukaan diri dan kepuasan pernikahan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa semakin terbuka pasangan dalam mengekspresikan perasaan dan nilai-nilai pribadi, semakin tinggi kepuasan pernikahan yang dirasakan, meskipun terpisah jarak. Hasil penelitian ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi konselor pernikahan dan lembaga terkait untuk mendorong keterbukaan komunikasi emosional maupun spiritual sebagai strategi adaptasi pasangan LDM.

Kata kunci: keterbukaan diri, kepuasan pernikahan, long distance

A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a form of social relationship that is inseparable from human life, where a husband and wife are bound by emotional commitment, responsibility, and ongoing interactions. In this context, marital satisfaction for a wife is an important indicator of relationship quality, encompassing happiness, fulfilled expectations, and the wife's perception of her partner's ability to manage differences and conflicts that arise. (Hadori & Minhaji, 2018) In recent decades, the phenomenon of long-distance marriage (LDM) has become increasingly prevalent, driven by job mobility, educational attainment, or economic demands. This marriage model places the wife in a situation of geographical separation from her husband for a period of time, potentially impacting relationship quality and marital satisfaction. (Jamil et al., 2023).

Unlike cohabiting couples, LDM couples face communication challenges, limited physical interaction, and a higher risk of misunderstandings. (Ichsani, n.d.) Research shows that limited face-to-face interaction can reduce emotional closeness and trigger anxiety about the continuation of the relationship. (Safitri & Rinasari Kusuma, 2017). Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to

marital satisfaction in the context of LDM is important, especially the variable of self-disclosure which plays a strategic role in maintaining intimacy and trust.

Self-disclosure is defined as the process of revealing personal information to a partner, whether related to feelings, thoughts, experiences, or aspirations, with the aim of deepening the relationship.(DeVito, 2016). In long-distance relationships, self-disclosure is often the primary means of maintaining emotional closeness, replacing limited physical interaction.(Fitri, nd)Wives who are able to share openly with their husbands tend to have higher levels of trust and marital satisfaction, because openness allows for more effective conflict resolution and reduces misunderstandings.(Uky, 2023).

The phenomenon of long-distance marriage in Indonesia is increasing along with the growing number of migrant workers, maritime workers, and couples separated due to further education. Based on Indonesian Population Mobility Statistics(*Central Statistics Agency, 2023*).Interregional population movement in Indonesia is largely driven by work, resulting in an increase in couples living separately or maintaining long-distance relationships. This creates a unique relationship dynamic, with wives in long-distance relationships relying on online communication with their husbands as a substitute for face-to-face interaction.(Najah, 2024).

In the relationship psychology literature, limited physical interaction in LDM couples is often associated with increased potential for conflict and decreased marital satisfaction.(Salsabila et al., 2023). Key challenges include difficulty building emotional intimacy, barriers to non-verbal communication, and a higher potential for suspicion. On the other hand, wives who are able to maintain consistent self-disclosure demonstrate better adaptability and tend to have more harmonious relationships.(Ichsani, n.d.).

Self-disclosure is not only a medium for exchanging information, but also a means of validating emotions and strengthening emotional bonds. Recent research has shown that couples who routinely engage in self-disclosure in long-

distance relationships can minimize the negative effects of physical distance on marital satisfaction.(Fitri, nd; Salsabila et al., 2023). Furthermore, healthy self-disclosure can help build positive perceptions of your partner, strengthen feelings of security, and reduce relationship-related anxiety.

Previous studies have tended to highlight variables such as trust, jealousy, or commitment, but relatively few have specifically examined the influence of self-disclosure on marital satisfaction in the context of long-distance relationships (LDM). This creates an important research gap to fill, given advances in communication technology that have made self-disclosure easier than it was a decade ago. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between wives' self-disclosure and marital satisfaction among wives in long-distance relationships (LDM) in Indonesia.

Conceptually, marital satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality of the marital relationship, which includes emotional, physical, and cognitive dimensions.(Fincham & Beach, 2010; Hidayah et al., 2020) Couples with high levels of marital satisfaction generally demonstrate good communication skills, emotional needs are met, and the ability to adapt to life's changes and challenges. In the context of long-term relationships (LDM), relationship quality depends heavily on how partners utilize communication channels to maintain emotional closeness and manage conflict.(Safitri & Rinasari Kusuma, 2017)

Self-disclosure according to(DeVito, 2016). is the process of intentionally sharing personal information, thoughts, and feelings with another person to build closeness. In a marriage, self-disclosure allows partners to understand each other's needs, hopes, and concerns. Altman and Taylor, in their Social Penetration Theory, assert that the deeper the level of self-disclosure, the stronger the interpersonal relationship.(Altman & Taylor, 1973).

In long-distance relationships, self-disclosure acts as a substitute for physical interaction in building intimacy. This is in line with the findings(Jamil et

al., 2023). which states that open communication can reduce uncertainty, increase trust, and strengthen commitment in long-distance relationships. Thus, self-disclosure is not only a mechanism for exchanging information, but also a tool for maintaining emotional stability and preventing a decline in marital satisfaction due to physical distance.

Based on this explanation, this study positions self-disclosure as an important predictor of marital satisfaction in long-distance couples. The gap in previous research, which tends to ignore the variable of self-disclosure in the context of long-distance couples, underlies the urgency of this study. The results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of family psychology studies, while also providing practical guidance for long-distance couples in maintaining the quality of their relationships.

B. THEORETICAL BASIS

Marital satisfaction is an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality of the marital relationship, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects.(Fincham & Beach, 2010)This satisfaction is reflected in the couple's happiness, intimacy, and ability to deal with conflict and life changes.(Hidayah et al., 2020).(Hadori & Minhaji, 2018)explains that marital satisfaction is closely related to household harmony supported by effective communication, trust, and balanced management of household roles. In the context of long-distance marriage (LDM), marital satisfaction is often tested due to limited physical interaction, making communication quality a key factor.(Safitri & Rinasari Kusuma, 2017).

Self-disclosure according toDe Vito, (2016)is the process of intentionally revealing personal information to others, whether in the form of feelings, thoughts or experiences, with the aim of strengthening relationships.(Altman & Taylor, 1973)Social Penetration Theory states that the deeper the self-disclosure, the stronger the interpersonal relationship formed. In long-distance marriages, self-disclosure becomes important because it replaces face-to-face interaction.(Ichsani,

n.d.)And(Firmanto & Pertiwi, 2023)found that couples who are open in expressing feelings, life values, and personal problems tend to have higher marital satisfaction.

Long Distance Marriage (LDM) is defined as a marriage relationship that is experienced by a couple who are geographically separated for a certain period of time, usually due to work, education or economic factors.(Jamil et al., 2023)This condition creates challenges in the form of limited nonverbal communication, feelings of anxiety, and potential conflict.(Salsabila et al., 2023). However, research(Fitri, nd)emphasized that self-disclosure is an effective adaptation strategy in maintaining emotional intimacy and strengthening trust in LDM couples.

Self-disclosure has been shown to play a significant role in increasing marital satisfaction. Studies(Firmanto & Pertiwi, 2023)found that self-disclosure had a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Similarly, research(Aulia, 2022)This study shows that self-disclosure coupled with gratitude can maintain harmony in long-distance marriages. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the wife's self-disclosure, the higher the marital satisfaction, even in a long-distance relationship.

Based on the theoretical study above, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows: Ha: There is a significant positive relationship between wife's self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in couples undergoing Long Distance Marriage (LDM).

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational method to examine the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in couples in long-distance marriages (LDM). The correlational approach was chosen because this study aimed to determine the extent of self-disclosure's influence on marital satisfaction without manipulating existing variables. This design allows

researchers to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables studied (Sugiyono, 2021). This study focuses on understanding relationship dynamics in the context of LDM, which is increasingly evolving due to the social and economic mobility of couples.

Couples in long-distance relationships (LDM) generally face challenges such as limited communication and physical interaction, which can impact their marital satisfaction (Ichsani, 2023). Therefore, self-disclosure is key to maintaining emotional closeness, especially when physical interaction is not possible. In this study, self-disclosure was measured across several dimensions, including emotional disclosure, personal experiences, and outlook on life, which can strengthen marital bonds even when couples are geographically separated.

The population in this study was limited to married wives who were undergoing long-distance marriage (LDM) and resided in South Sumatra Province. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) having been married for at least one year, (2) currently experiencing a long-distance marriage with a minimum separation duration of three months, and (3) being willing to participate in the study. Based on these criteria, a total of 26 respondents were obtained. This number is considered adequate because it represents the specific characteristics of the targeted population, which is relatively limited and difficult to access.

The research instrument consisted of two main sections. The first section measured marital satisfaction using an adapted ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, comprising 40 statements. This instrument covers nine dimensions: personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, recreational activities, sexual relations, children and parenting, relationships with family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation. The second section measured self-disclosure with 32 statements covering eight dimensions:

emotional state, sexual relations, interpersonal relations, personal problems, tastes/tastes, thoughts, religious aspects, and problem solving, including work/education-related interactions.

Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Higher scores indicate higher levels of marital satisfaction or self-disclosure. Prior to the main data collection, the instruments were tested on a pilot sample consisting of 20 respondents who had similar characteristics to the research subjects but were not included in the main sample. This pilot testing aimed to assess the clarity, validity, and reliability of the instrument items.

Instrument validity testing was conducted to ensure that each item accurately measured its intended construct. Item validity was evaluated using Corrected Item-Total Correlation, with a correlation value greater than 0.30 considered valid. The results showed that all items on both scales met the validity criteria and were therefore retained for further analysis.

Next, a reliability test was conducted to determine the instrument's internal consistency. Reliability analysis using WINSTEPS yielded a Person Reliability value of 0.83 and an Item Reliability value of 0.84. These values indicate excellent reliability, indicating the instrument's reliability for data collection in this study.

The research procedure began with the distribution of an online questionnaire using Google Forms to eligible respondents. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form as a form of agreement to participate. The collected data were then analyzed using Pearson correlation with SPSS software to examine the relationship between wives' self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in LDM couples.

D. RESEARCH RESULT

Based on the results of data collection on 26 respondents who were wives of Long Distance Marriage (LDM) couples, an analysis was conducted to see the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction.

Descriptive analysis shows that the average score of respondents' self-disclosure is in the high category, with an average value of 122.85 (SD = 10.41) out of a maximum score of 160. This indicates that most respondents have a tendency to express personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences to their partners even though they are geographically separated. The dimension with the highest score is emotional state (M = 4.21), followed by interpersonal relationships and personal problems, while the dimension with the lowest score is the religious aspect, although it is still in the high category.

Meanwhile, the average marital satisfaction score was also in the high category, with an average value of 145.38 (SD = 12.27) out of a maximum score of 200. The dimensions of marital satisfaction that obtained the highest scores were communication (M = 4.33) and sexual relations, followed by conflict resolution and recreational activities. The dimensions with relatively lower scores were financial management and equalitarian roles (division of household roles), although both remained in the medium-high category.

Table 1. Summary of Variable Statistics

Variables	Item	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Marital Satisfaction	40	120	178	145.38	12.27	High
Self-Disclosure	32	98	145	122.85	10.41	High

The results of the validity test of the research instrument using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation technique showed that all items on the self-disclosure and marital satisfaction scales had correlation values of more than 0.30 and were statistically significant, so that all items were declared valid and suitable for use for measurement. Furthermore, the results of the reliability test using the WINSTEPS software showed a Person Reliability value of 0.83 and an Item Reliability of 0.84. These values indicate that both instruments have excellent internal consistency, so that the measurement results are reliable and stable.

A Pearson correlation test was conducted to determine the relationship between wife self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in Long Distance Marriage (LDM) couples. The analysis results showed a significant positive relationship between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.624$ and a significance of $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). This correlation value, based on Guilford's (1956) interpretation, is included in the strong relationship category, meaning that the higher the wife's self-disclosure, the higher the perceived marital satisfaction. Conversely, the lower the self-disclosure, the lower the marital satisfaction.

The findings of this study confirm that self-disclosure is a key factor in maintaining and improving the quality of marital relationships in long-distance marriages (LDM). In situations of geographical separation, a wife's ability to express personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences to her partner plays a crucial role in building mutual trust, emotional intimacy, and effective communication. This openness helps minimize misunderstandings and conflict while strengthening emotional bonds, which directly impacts marital satisfaction.

Statistically, the study results not only show a significant positive relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction, but also confirm that self-disclosure can play a significant role in maintaining harmony in long-distance marriages. This finding aligns with interpersonal communication theory, which places openness as a fundamental element in building healthy and lasting relationships.

The practical implications of these findings include the importance of LDM couples developing open and supportive communication patterns, and the need for marriage counselors to make self-disclosure a focus of interventions to improve relationship quality. Thus, the results of this study provide a foundation for further study of the factors influencing the dynamics of long-distance relationships and effective strategies for maintaining marital harmony.

E. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in wives in long-distance relationships (LDM), with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.624$ ($p = 0.001$). This finding is in line with the results of a study by Firmanto & Pertiwi (2023) which also reported that self-disclosure significantly influences marital satisfaction in LDM couples. (Firmanto & Pertiwi, 2023) Similarly, Anna Aulia's research confirms that a combination of openness and gratitude contributes to happiness and harmony in long-distance marriages. (Aulia, 2022).

Theoretically, self-disclosure forms the foundation for deep emotional communication, building mutual trust, and strengthening intimacy, essential components of marital satisfaction. Especially in the context of long-distance relationships (LDM), limited physical interaction makes open communication even more vital. A study by Holtzman et al., (2021) found that the frequency and responsiveness of online communication (e.g., via text messaging) were positively correlated with relationship satisfaction in long-distance marriages. This supports the argument that open communication, even through digital media, can strengthen emotional bonds in long-distance situations.

The findings of this study also show that the most influential dimension of self-disclosure in increasing marital satisfaction is the disclosure of emotions and personal experiences. This finding aligns with qualitative studies showing that digital communication strategies, including voice/video calls, messaging, and

media sharing, can strengthen emotional intimacy and build trust in LDM marriages.(Prakoso et al., 2024). In line with that, research(Hammonds et al., 2020)found that couples in long-distance relationships who consistently engage in self-disclosure and share daily experiences through digital communication media tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction because they still feel emotionally connected despite the distance.

Furthermore, openness in spiritual aspects has also been shown to positively impact relationship quality in long-distance couples. A recent study by Mirzayanti found that integrating spirituality and digital communication, such as WhatsApp, increases couple resilience, which is an important foundation for marital satisfaction in long-distance relationships.(Mirzayanti et al., 2025).

Another noteworthy finding is the role of spirituality and cultural values in strengthening marital satisfaction among long-distance couples. A systematic review by (RaesiRasoul et al., 2025) highlights that spiritual and cultural beliefs function as coping mechanisms that enhance relationship stability and satisfaction, particularly in stressful conditions such as physical separation.

This finding is relevant to the results of the present study, where the dimension of religious openness, although lower than emotional openness, still contributes positively to marital satisfaction. It indicates that spiritual communication between partners can serve as an additional emotional resource that helps couples maintain resilience and harmony despite geographical distance. Therefore, integrating emotional and spiritual self-disclosure becomes an important strategy for sustaining marital quality in long-distance relationships.

These findings have practical implications: LDM couples should consciously practice self-disclosure, whether through regular conversations, the use of more interactive communication technologies (video calls, voice notes), or discussions about shared life values. In this way, self-disclosure serves not only as a means of sharing information but also as a means of strengthening a sense of togetherness and meaningfulness in the relationship.

The limitations of this study are not only related to the relatively small sample size but also to the lack of differentiation in the characteristics of long-distance marriages experienced by respondents. For instance, this study did not specifically classify whether the LDM condition was caused by occupational demands, educational purposes, or other factors, which may influence the dynamics of communication and marital satisfaction.

In addition, demographic variables such as duration of marriage, frequency of face-to-face meetings, and length of separation were not analyzed as potential confounding variables. These factors may have contributed to variations in both self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. Therefore, future research is recommended to include these variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in diverse LDM contexts.

When compared with previous studies, the results of this study strengthen the finding that self-disclosure is a major determinant of marital satisfaction. For example, research (Crystal Jiang & Hancock, 2013). shows that couples who maintain intense communication and openness tend to have more stable relationships, even in long-distance relationships. However, this study provides an update by emphasizing that openness in spiritual and emotional aspects carries greater weight than other aspects such as financial transparency or future plans.

The practical implication of this research is the need for marriage counseling-based interventions that emphasize self-disclosure training, particularly for long-distance couples who are vulnerable to emotional intimacy issues. Family counselors or religious institutions can play a crucial role in facilitating regular couple communication sessions, including utilizing communication technology that supports both verbal and nonverbal expression.

For further research, it is recommended that a mixed-methods approach be used to enrich the quantitative data obtained with qualitative narratives. Furthermore, expanding the sample to include couples with diverse cultures,

occupations, and marital durations would provide a more comprehensive picture of the role of self-disclosure in maintaining marital satisfaction.

F. CLOSING

This study confirms that self-disclosure plays a significant role in increasing marital satisfaction in couples in long-distance relationships (LDMs). The results indicate that the dimensions of self-disclosure, particularly in emotional and spiritual aspects, contribute significantly to healthy communication, mutual trust, and strengthening emotional bonds. This provides empirical support for interpersonal communication theory and adds to the literature on the determinants of marital satisfaction.

Although this study successfully uncovered a significant relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction, several limitations are noteworthy, such as the relatively small and homogeneous sample size and the use of a self-report-based instrument that could potentially introduce subjective bias. Therefore, future research is expected to involve a more diverse sample and employ a more comprehensive methodological approach, for example through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, to ensure more representative findings.

Practically, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of building open and authentic communication in long-distance relationships. Couples who are able to honestly express their emotions, experiences, values, and beliefs are more likely to maintain marital harmony. Thus, self-disclosure is not only a crucial foundation for marital satisfaction but also serves as an adaptive strategy for navigating the challenges of long-distance relationships in the modern era.

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