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# Marital Satisfaction as Measured by Marital Adjustment and Self-Disclosure among Wives Living with Parents-in-Law

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**Abstract.** Marital satisfaction is difficult to achieve because various problems arise after marriage, especially for wives living with their in-laws. The number of family members often has the potential to increase conflict between daughters and in-laws. Marital satisfaction can be affected by marital adjustment and self-disclosure. This study aims to determine the relationship between marital adjustment self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in wives who live with their parents-in-law simultaneously or partially. Using a correlational quantitative approach with 67 wives who lived with their parents-in-law for at least one year with a marriage age of 1–5 years and lived in Semarang as participants, Data were collected through the incidental sampling method from June 21, 2023, until June 27, 2023, using Google Form and multiple regression to analyze the data. The result showed a positive relationship between marital adjustment self-disclosure and marital satisfaction with the coefficient correlation value  $R = 0,882$  with  $sig = 0,000 < 0,01$ , so the central hypothesis of this study is accepted with an influence of 77.8%. This study informs wives with in-laws to be more open and adjustable.

**Keywords:** Living With Parents-in-Law, Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Self-Disclosure, Wives.

## 1 Introduction

Marriage is an essential phase in human life because marriage is the beginning of a new life for two people who previously lived alone and then lived together. Santrock said marriage is the union of two unique individuals, bringing their personalities to their cultural backgrounds and experiences [25]. Hurlock explained that every individual in early marriage must unite many things in themselves [12].

Married couples expect that they will feel happy in their marriage so that, in the end, the couple can feel marital satisfaction. Harahap and Purba explained that marital satisfaction is a subjective experience, intense feelings, and behavior based on factors between individuals that are influenced by the quality of interactions within the marriage [10]. However, marital satisfaction is not necessarily easy to realize, and this is because various problems arise after entering marriage. Marni stated that the initial period of marriage is a period of adjustment, and a crisis arises when first entering marriage [16]. Couples are expected to be independent and responsible for their new life, creating a new home and family, separating from their parents, and living with their spouse. But, nowadays, there is a phenomenon of married couples still living with their parents or parents-in-law. According to the result of Susenas Semarang 2020,

25.37% of couples live with their parents or parents-in-law; this is also related to the result of an initial interview with five wives in Semarang City. Haryati (2017) says there are several reasons why couples still live with their parents, such as they cannot afford to rent or buy their own house, lack of economic capability, the parents-in-law wanting company from the husband, and the husband not wanting to leave his parent's house. Married couples who live in the same house with parents-in-law will become a large family, and the increase of family members often potentially increases the conflicts between daughter-in-law and parents-in-law [9]

Based on an online survey conducted by Teman Bumil and Populix on 995 wives as respondents throughout Indonesia, around 54 percent of them admitted that they had difficulty adapting and establishing a good relationship with their parents-in-law, and many of them ended up having bad relationships with parents-in-law (Jawapos, 2021). Research conducted by Andriyani & Widyayanti (2015) found that the source of problems that often arise when living with parents-in-law is the intervention from mother-in-law related to their children's and family problems, differences in perceptions of childcare and education issues, financial management and household arrangements. Agree with Andriyani & Widyayanti (2015). The author has also conducted brief interviews with five wives who live in the same house as their parents-in-law; it can be concluded that they all have conflicts with their in-laws regarding child care, finance, and household affairs. The various problems that exist can inhibit couples from achieving marital satisfaction.

Some problems can be experienced by wives who live in the same house with in-laws, so the wife must adjust to the initial conditions of marriage with her husband while living in the same house with the husband's family. The wife's problem becomes more complex, in addition to adapting to her husband and in-laws. Therefore, wives need to be able to adjust the marriage so that marital adjustment becomes an essential factor in determining marital satisfaction. Married couples have to learn a lot about each other; two personalities of both husband and wife harmonize to fit each other and can give and receive [16]. Based on Rospita & Lestari's research, it is said that marital adjustment has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction in women [22]. So, to achieve satisfaction in marriage, married couples must continually readjust their understanding of what is expected of each other in their roles [22] The same results were stated by Abbas and Nadhirah that there is a significant correlation between marital adjustment and marital satisfaction [1,17]. Different results were expressed by Tazkiya & Puspawati that there was an indirect effect between marital adjustment and marital satisfaction; the gender role variable mediated the relationship between these two variables [29].

Moreover that factors that support marital satisfaction are open communication, open expression of feelings, mutual trust, absence of spousal domination, satisfying sexual relationships, social life, place of residence, sufficient income, children, religious belief and relationships with laws. Harahap and Purba said a person's ability to reveal self-information to others to achieve a close relationship is called self-disclosure [10, 28]. Communicating personal information about oneself is crucial to achieving relationship satisfaction, but it is also essential to communicate their feelings about their partner through affectionate communication. A wife living in the same house with her parents-in-law will likely experience various problems. If the wife is willing to complain in a context to be constructive, she will feel more relieved and, at the same time, can find a solution with her husband. In addition, the wife will feel supported by her husband because the husband is willing to listen to her complaints, especially if the husband is also willing to self-disclose; the couple can support each other and achieve marital satisfaction. Self-disclosure is also related to the level of marital satisfaction; this is as revealed

in the research of <sup>13</sup> that there is a significant relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. Different results were expressed by Rosyida that self-disclosure did not affect marital satisfaction [6,10,15,21,20,23,24,28].

The description above relates to the results of the researcher's initial interviews with five wives who live in the same house as their parents-in-law. Those wives often feel dissatisfied with their marriages because of conflicts between parents-in-law or husband's family, and the lack of self-disclosure and marital adjustment makes them feel dissatisfied. Wives feel uncomfortable disclosing because the mother-in-law is the husband's parent, especially if the husband is very close to the mother. In addition, the subject also revealed that the location of the residence, which is still in the same house as the parents-in-law, makes it difficult for the wife to adjust due to the many differences. In contrast, in the early age of marriage, couples have not yet made perfect adjustments between spouses, in addition to the presence of pretty dominant strangers.

Referring to the suggestions from previous research conducted by Rospita & Lestari that future researchers can expand research variables such as self-disclosure, which has a relationship with marital satisfaction based on the search that has been done, authors have not found research that reveals the relationship between marital adjustment and self-disclosure together on marital satisfaction, especially in the context of wives who live in the same house with parents-in-law [22].

Based on the description above, the objectives of this study are: 1) Is marital adjustment related to marital satisfaction among wives living with parents-in-law?; 2) Is self-disclosure related to marital satisfaction among wives living with parents-in-law? ; 3) Is marital adjustment and self-disclosure related to marital satisfaction among wives living with parents-in-law? <sup>1</sup>

## 2 Literature Review

Fowers and Olson stated that <sup>9</sup> marital satisfaction is a subjective feeling felt by a married couple related to aspects of a marriage, such as a sense of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasant experiences with their partner when considering aspects <sup>8</sup> of their marital life, which is individualized [8]. Like Fowers and Olson also stated that marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of the level of happiness, pleasure, and experience in the marital relationship or how <sup>4</sup> far a person feels fulfilled of their needs in marriage [8]. Moreover, Kara & Kulbas stated that marriage satisfaction is the psychological satisfaction that creates universal expectations such as gain, justice, equality, and sharing problems, as well as personal desires such as love, attachment, trust, and sexual satisfaction obtained from marriage [14]. So, the author concluded that marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of relationship quality based on universal expectations such as the level of happiness, benefits, justice, equality, personal desires such as love, attachment, trust, sexual satisfaction, and fulfillment of their needs <sup>6</sup> in marriage. Fowers & Olson stated that marital satisfaction has ten dimensions, such as communication, leisure activity, religious orientation, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual orientation, family and friends, personality issue, egalitarian role, and parenting [8,18].

To achieve marital satisfaction, Gunarsa and Gunarsa said the factors influencing marital satisfaction are attention, knowledge between family members, self-recognition, mutual understanding, acceptance, self-development, and adjustment. In addition, Rospita and Lestari said the primary adjustment in the whole marital life process is a series that must be undertaken when individuals enter a household [22,9]. Furthermore, that factors influencing marital

satisfaction are self-disclosure, self-esteem, and sex or love. It is also supported by Wardhani that marital satisfaction is influenced by self-disclosure, which cannot be separated from achieving marital satisfaction [30]. From the description above, the author takes two factors that can influence marital satisfaction: marital adjustment and self-disclosure.

Rospita and Lestari said that marital adjustment is the process of getting used to the new and different conditions of being husband and wife, with the expectation that they will accept the responsibilities and play the roles of husband and wife [22]. Spanier and Christina and Matulesky stated that marital adjustment has four aspects: dyadic consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and affectional expression [7]. Meanwhile, Busby stated that marital adjustment is an adjustment between husband and wife in marital life, which consists of dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion as the aspects to fulfill [5].

Waring explained that self-disclosure is making an individual known by others by verbally expressing their thoughts, attitudes or behaviors, feelings, beliefs, and past experiences to their partner [31]. Furthermore, the other said self-disclosure can be descriptive, evaluative, and explicit. The information is descriptive if the individual describes various facts about himself that are unknown to others. At the same time, it is evaluative if it relates to the personal opinion or feelings towards something, for example, things that are liked or disliked. It is explicit if the disclosure of self-information is confidential and cannot be told to others unless the individual himself discloses it. Self-disclosure has four dimensions: relationship, sexuality, money, and imbalance [31].

### 3 Method

This study uses a correlational quantitative approach, and the dependent variable in this study is marital satisfaction, while the independent variables are marital adjustment and self-disclosure. This study uses incidental sampling, with the following criteria: 1) Wife who lived in the same house with parents-in-law for at least one year; 2) Marriage age of 1-5 years; 3) Live in Semarang City.

The instrument of this study uses three scales, such as:

**Marital Satisfaction.** This variable will be measured using the EMS (ENRICH Marital Satisfaction) scale from Fowers & Olson which has been adopted by Putama with a reliability coefficient after adaptation of 0.88 [8,19]. Still, there is no information regarding the validity of Putama [19]. The original scale's validity value is 0.55 to 0.80, and the reliability coefficient is 0.86. This scale consists of 15 items and 10 dimensions. It will be presented in favorable and unfavorable items.

**Marital Adjustment.** A marital adjustment will be measured using the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS-14) from Busby which consists of 14 items and three dimensions such as dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion that are presented in favorable and unfavorable items [5]. The author will adapt this original scale into Indonesian through professional judgment. The original validity value is 0.97, and the reliability coefficient is 0.90, while the validity and reliability after adaptation will be examined with the used-try-out technique.

**Self-disclosure.** Self-disclosure will be measured using the Marital Self-disclosure Questionnaire from Waring, which consists of 40 items and four dimensions, such as

relationship, sexuality, money, and imbalance, that are presented in favorable and unfavorable items [31]. The author will adapt this original scale into Indonesian through professional judgment. The original validity value is 0.50-0.90, and the reliability coefficient is 0.70, while the validity and reliability after adaptation will be examined with the used-try-out technique.

This study used content validity by professional judgment and constructed validity using Corrected Item Total Correlation and Part-whole in SPSS to select the items. The Reliability test uses the Alpha Cronbach technique to measure the consistency of the items in SPSS [3]. In this study, the data obtained will be processed using the Multiple Regression Analysis statistical method to predict how the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) increases and decreases when there are two independent variables (marital adjustment and self-disclosure) as predictor factors [3].

#### 4 Result

Various data were obtained after collecting data using Google Forms from June 21, 2023, to June 27, 2023. Demographic data are presented in Figure 1.

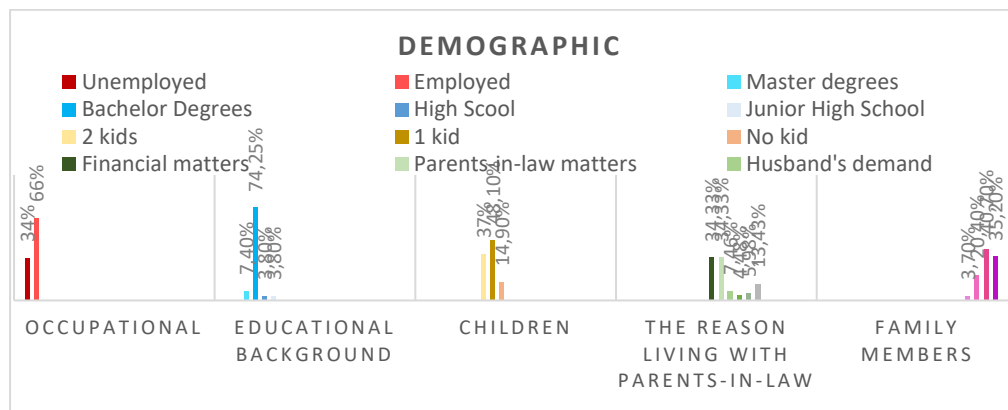


Figure 1. Demographic Charts

Note: The demographic data above derived from 67 participants

The item selection & reliability results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Items Selection and Reliability Result

Variable	Items selection	Reliability
Marital Satisfaction	All items have discriminant power with scores between 0.330 - 0.810	The alpha reliability coefficient is 0.919.
Marital Adjustment	All items have discriminant power with scores between 0.378 - 0.778.	The alpha reliability coefficient is 0.894.
Self-disclosure	Eight items have low discriminant power below 0.3 (5, 12, 16, 20, 21, 24, 35, and 36). Thirty-two items have good discriminant power with scores between 0.330 - 0.810.	An alpha reliability coefficient of 0.957.

Note: The table above demonstrates each variable's item selection and reliability value.

All data were analyzed with SPSS. The assumption test resulted in normally distributed data and showed a linear trend. The Normality Test of Marital Satisfaction using Kolmogorov-Smirnov showed a K-S Z score of 0,783 with  $p > 0,05$ ; Marital Adjustment showed a K-S Z score of 0,795 with  $p > 0,05$ ; and Self-disclosure showed a K-S Z score 0,543 with  $p > 0,05$  which means all the spreading distribution is normal. The Linearity Test of Marital Satisfaction with Marital Adjustment showed an F score of 207,498 with  $p < 0,05$ , and Marital Satisfaction with Self-disclosure showed an F score of 97,781 with  $p < 0,05$ , which means it has a linear trend. The Hypothesis-tested test result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Hypothesis Tested Result

No	Hypothesis	Correlation	Sig. (p)	Summary
1	There is a positive relationship between marital adjustment and self-disclosure with marital satisfaction of wives living in the same house with parents-in-law (H <sub>1</sub> ).	$R_{y.1.2} = 0,882$	0,000	$p < 0,01$ (Strongly significant) H <sub>1</sub> accepted
2	A positive relationship exists between marital adjustment and marital satisfaction of wives living in the same house with their parents-in-law (H <sub>2</sub> ).	$r_{x1.y} = 0,873$	0,000	$p < 0,01$ (Strongly significant) H <sub>2</sub> accepted
3	There is a positive relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction of wives living in the same house with their parents-in-law (H <sub>3</sub> ).	$r_{x2.y} = 0,775$	0,000	$p < 0,01$ (Strongly significant) H <sub>3</sub> accepted

Note: The table above demonstrated relates to the hypothesis

Using multiple correlation analysis, a correlation coefficient between marital adjustment and self-disclosure with marital satisfaction of wives who live in the same house with their parents-in-law is  $R = 0.882$  with  $p < 0.01$ . This means there is a positive relationship between marital adjustment and self-disclosure with marital satisfaction of wives living with parents-in-law, with an influence of 77.8%, so the first hypothesis is accepted. Meanwhile, the table above shows that marital adjustment influences 61.2% of marital satisfaction, and self-disclosure influences 16.6% of marital satisfaction in wives living with parents-in-law.

## 5 Discussion

For some married couples, living with parents-in-law can be favorable, but for others, it might be a boomerang because these situations can cause a conflict in marital life. Several relationships between daughter-in-law and parents-in-law, namely conflictual relationships, indifferent relationships, or harmonious relationships that are often heard and become exciting topics of conversation in the consultation media are relationships full of conflict [11]. The conflict is experienced by many daughters-in-law with mother-in-law, as happened to 5 wives who have become the initial informants in this study. These conflicts can be repressed by making an effort for marital adjustment by the wife.

A wife's marital adjustment is a holistic and lengthy process, where the process of marital adjustment can be traced thoroughly over time, not only between the wife and the husband but also with the husband's family. The early period of marriage is a process of adjustment between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law after the former are two strangers who are then united in a

marital relationship. With various demands, especially marital adjustment, the first five years of marriage are a critical early period that determines the success of the marriage [17].

Marital adjustment includes three aspects that can affect marital satisfaction. Firstly, the **dyadic consensus** is how the couple has an agreement and understanding in marriage, which includes various matters such as finance, recreation, religion, social relations, ethics, ideals, and division of household duties. Components in this aspect can affect marital satisfaction; for example, in terms of financial arrangements, if there is no excellent and fair understanding and agreement in the couple, it could be that the wife feels there is injustice in their relationship, causing a decrease in her marital satisfaction. Secondly, the **dyadic satisfaction** aspect is how the couple perceives the happiness or unhappiness in their relationship, how often they have arguments, the pleasure of spending time together, and whether there are thoughts of divorce.

For example, if there is an inaccurate perception of the wife in viewing the problems in her marriage, it is possible for a decrease in marital satisfaction in the couple. Thirdly, **dyadic cohesion** is how often couples spend time together and how couples can feel happiness when doing fun activities together. Couples with reasonable marital adjustment can be seen from this aspect, where couples feel equally happy and happy when doing activities together. Still, conversely, if they do not find happiness through joint activities, their marital satisfaction may decrease. From the three aspects above, the **dyadic consensus** is the dominant aspect of achieving marital satisfaction with a coefficient of 0.836  $p < 0.01$ . This can happen because agreement in a relationship is essential to marriage functioning [5].

Besides performing marital adjustment, another factor that can help the wife achieve marital satisfaction is self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is essential because it can make communication between spouses more compelling and intimate and create opportunities for married couples to exchange ideas and understand each other's feelings. Self-disclosure makes communication more open, allowing the husband or wife to get feedback from the other person. Meanwhile, if a wife finds it difficult to express herself openly, she will tend to be dissatisfied with her relationship with her husband [26]. This means that self-disclosure is one of the characteristics of good communication because couples express their thoughts and feelings so that it will make them happier. However, self-disclosure has aspects that must be fulfilled to achieve marital satisfaction.

Firstly, **relationship** is an aspect of self-disclosure by the wife related to her thoughts and feelings directly about the relationship she shares with her husband. For example, the wife is willing to tell her husband that she needs her husband's presence or wants her husband to come home from work on time because it is uncomfortable if she is alone with her mother-in-law at home; with this openness can increase marital satisfaction in the wife—secondly, **sexuality** which is the disclosure of thoughts and feelings related to sexuality. For example, suppose a wife is willing to express her feelings or comfort when she is about to have intercourse and what she wants regarding her sexual life. In that case, this will affect happiness in her relationship, which will undoubtedly have an impact on her marital satisfaction. Thirdly is **money**, which means disclosure of information directly related to finances. Wives who can openly disclose their financial needs and feelings if there are problems in financial matters will cause happier feelings and affect their marital satisfaction. The last aspect is an **imbalance**, a disclosure related to reciprocal injustice between husband and wife. The wife expects that the husband can do the same thing as the wife has done; in this case, the wife needs to openly convey her objections to the issue so that she does not repress her feelings and becomes happier because she has conveyed her aspirations to her husband. All of these things can certainly affect marital



satisfaction. But from the four aspects above, it turns out that **money** has the most substantial relationship with the marital satisfaction of wives living with their parents-in-law, with a correlation of 0.678 with  $p < 0.01$ . Furthermore, this also happened in Sari research; they mentioned that money is the highest aspect often disclosed in early adult couples [26]. This finding is in line with a statement from Waring stating that women disclose more than men on money aspects [31].

## 6 Conclusion

The study found a positive correlation between marital adjustment and self-disclosure with marital satisfaction of wives living with parents-in-law. The correlation coefficient was  $R = 0.882$ , indicating a significant influence of 77.8%. The most considerable influence was marital adjustment at 61.2%, while self-disclosure had a 16.6% influence. The study concluded that marital adjustment is essential in achieving marital satisfaction for wives living with parents-in-law. The results showed three levels of marital satisfaction: moderate (26.9%), high (65.7%), and low (7%). The author classified marital satisfaction as moderate and self-disclosure as moderate. The study concluded that marital adjustment and self-disclosure are crucial in achieving marital satisfaction for wives living with parents-in-law.

The limitation of this study is the participant's criteria are quite specific, so it takes time to collect the data. We suggested the following researchers expand the population to get more participants and expand the criteria for the participants, such as marital age over five years or husband as the participant so we can see another point of view. The author also suggests that the following researchers can expand the variables such as conflict resolution and self-esteem.

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