

Research Article

A Study on The Marriage Phenomenology of Commuter Marriage Spouse

B'tari Sekar Nastiti^{*a}, Y. Bagus Wismanto^a

[a] Soegijapranata Catholic University, Indonesia
^{*}Corresponding author at email: btarisekarn@gmail.com

Abstract: In general, the marriage is lived by a spouse who lives together and cooperates with each other to shape the family. Recently, many couples do not live together, but in a distant city, and are called a long-distance marriage or a commuter marriage. From many reasons that create the long distance marriage, one of which is the job. The aim of this study is to find out the condition of the marriage life in commuter marriage and the dynamics on perceived marital satisfaction. This research method uses the qualitative method. Subjects in this study are 3 pairs of husband and wife practicing commuter marriage, which has a minimum marriage age of 5 years and has at least one child. The research result has shown that wives tend to experience dissatisfaction in the marriage, while the husbands feel quite happy in the marriage.

Keywords: commuter marriage; marital satisfaction; marital dynamics

GUIDENA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Psikologi, Bimbingan dan Konseling
Website : <http://ojs.fkip.ummetro.ac.id/index.php/bk>

Received : 2017-03-30. Published : 2017-06-31.



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

A dating couple commonly expects a more serious level in their relationship which leads to a marriage. A marriage according to Hawari (2013) is a bond between man and woman as husband and wife by law (Act), the law or customs prevailing there.

Ordinarily, a married couple will stay together in living a married life, but in the current time many couples undergo marriage but not live together in daily life. The couples decide not to stay together or undergo long-distance marriage due to a variety of things, and one of the reasons is the work (Beck, 2013; Dewi, 2013). The husband and wife will be living separately, different homes, and even different cities in order to meet the demands of their jobs. Those who live and work like this marriage are generally agreed to return and meet the family at certain times adapted to their work. A marriage of this kind is known as a commuter marriage (Dewi, 2013). A commuter marriage (Darahim, 2015; Dewi, 2013) is defined as a married couple, who decides voluntarily, commits to not stay together with the partner, and is separated by a certain distance in order to meet the demands of a thing.

A commuter marriage certainly has impacts for those who live it. Research conducted by Schwartz (Pamer, 2013) has revealed that the life of a commuter marriage could have a negative effect on the relationship of husband and wife, and could increase the risk of divorce as much as 40% higher than in non-commuter marriage partner. The reasons mentioned above are due to commuter marriage couples that do not have time to be together and have less time to communicate, and as a result they become more stressful. Lack of time to communicate well will possibly drown and end the relationship in divorce. Handayani (2015) has added that the commuter marriage couples experience loneliness and lack of social support. What Handayani proposes is in line with Pistole, Handayani (Knox, 2016) cites that the commuter marriage couples often feel lonely and frustrated. Furthermore, Waskito (Swastiningsih, 2014) has stated that the

loneliness opens the possibility for interested in other people than their partners.

Instead of the negative impact, the positive impact is also perceived in the commuter marriage. Dahl (2013); Stafford (Ben-Zeev, 2013) on a research states that the commuter marriage does not necessarily bring a bad effect on the couple. The study has found that the marital relationship that lived remotely would make their marital relationship become increasingly more powerful, there is equal participation, commitment and mutual trust rather than couples who do not have a remote relationship. However, a research in Indonesia (Mijilputri, 2015) has identified the presence of constraints in communication. The distance raises less intensive in communication, thus giving rise to negative thoughts and mistrust and misunderstanding that lead the couples to a conflict. Dewi and Sudhana (2013) add that the ongoing conflict makes couple relationship apart.

For the pairs of commuter marriage, the roles and responsibilities will be much heavier because they do not face and bear them together. Couples who live together undoubtedly have to adjust each other all the time and need to share roles well, then how couples who are apart as physical will make it. This can certainly influence satisfaction and harmony in the pairs of commuter marriage.

One type of works that provide frequent rotation that splits a husband and a wife can be found in the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI). Farewell can probably be avoided if the soldier brings the family to move, but it is not always possible for some reasons. Therefore, some families choose to live in a fixed city, while the soldiers keep moving to different areas. Based on the fact above, it is very interesting to know the relationship of husband and wife in the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI). The second thing that makes this study interesting is very limited subject of the respondents who are subjected to experiments. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of marital satisfaction on a couple who undergo a commuter marriage.

METHOD

This study applies qualitative research with phenomenological approach, which aims to uncover the psychological dynamics of marriage, especially marital satisfaction in the couples of commuter marriage.

Subjects in this study were three (3) couples of husband and wife who lived a commuter marriage. The three couples were living as soldiers on the part of the husband, in the Office of Military Prosecutor, Pleburan-Semarang. Their wives were scattered in several places, namely Tegal / Slawi, Pekalongan, and Magelang. Subjects were taken by purposive and had the characteristics: (1) the husband and wife who lived a commuter marriage because of the demands of work; (2) the marriage was undergoing marital life of more than five years; (3) the marriage had at least one child.

The data collection was done by in-depth interviews (guided) to the husband and wife, and direct observation of household environment where the family lived. The interviews were conducted as many as 3-4 times on the subject of her husband, and twice on the wives. The validity test of the data was done by re-checking the results of interviews

with subject colleagues. The validity of the data in research is conducted to satisfy a number of criteria: the degree of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moleong, 2012).

The analytical method used is the domain analysis method: an attempt to get a general overview of the data to answer the research focus, namely marital satisfaction, through the analysis phase as follows (Djamil, 2015): (1) Collecting data using various qualitative techniques, afterwards accepting and making assessment on the data; (2) Reducing data by selecting, removing, focusing and making overview to get a new category; (3) Presenting data in a certain format, such as tables, charts, flow charts, and so with narrative description; and (4) Making conclusion by finding patterns and meaning of the data that have been obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study uses three (3) couples of subjects, with a description of the characteristics of the subjects are as follows (Table 1):

Table 1. Characteristics of subjects

	Couple 1		Couple 2		Couple 3	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Initials	IS	DA	NQ	DK	MZ	DW
Age (y.o)	35	37	36	35	48	37
Occupation	TNI (Sergeant)	Housewife	TNI (Sergeant)	Vocational School Teacher	TNI (Sergeant)	Housewife
Domicile	Semarang	Tegal	Semarang	Pekalongan	Semarang	Magelang
Education	SLTA	S1	SLTA	S1	SLTA	SLTA
Child(ren)	3		1		6	
Marital Age	12 years		10 years		18 years	

After data from three subjects were gathered, facts about the impact of not gathering husband and wife were obtained, among others:

On the subject of one pair (IS-DA), they are pretty dynamic life-volatile. IS is a husband who was two years younger than his wife (DA). DA education (undergraduate / S1 in Teaching)

is higher than IS, but DA was forced not to work on the will of the husband (IS).

Based on the observation of body language during the interview, it appeared that the subject of IS was an emotional person. This was evident from the results of interviews with DA stating that when there was a dispute between them, IS showed explosive emotion. A

small mistake made by DA was able to cause great resentment for IS. The main problem experienced in pair IS-DA was the problem of the existence of a third person or infidelity. Ginanjar (2009) states that there are several causes of people having sex, among other people feel a sense of loneliness and a greater need for attention. Baron and Byrne (2004) defines loneliness as unhappiness at the state of a person's emotional and cognitive caused by the desire to have an intimate relationship is not reached. The statement is in accordance with the impact of loneliness and lack of concern felt by IS in living a long distance marriage. Individuals who experience loneliness are likely to be interested in someone who is not his/her partner (Swastiningsih, 2014, pp. 53-61).

In general, the relation between IS-DA was quiet and calm when they got together. IS felt the "wholeness" as a husband, while DA felt accompanied, and became a good wife. In sexual life, both are able to express themselves without problems. DA added that there was a burdening feeling due to stay at parents-in-law house, and children were unruly. DA felt dissatisfied with the other woman in the life of IS, though DA knew exactly that the other woman only as a repellent loneliness experienced by her husband. The other woman was found from various backgrounds, such as food seller, the pulse seller etc. This condition reduced the confidence of DA to IS.

It can be concluded that marital satisfaction of DA (as a wife) is not satisfied, it is because DA as a scholar cannot utilize her bachelor's degree, and the explosive character of IS as well as the other women in the life of IS. Then, IS generally feels quite satisfied, calm-peaceful.

Similarly, the problem of subjects on Couple 2 (NQ-DK) was the presence of the third person. NQ and DK were from the same town, Pekalongan. They were neighbors and friends since childhood, so they had known each other a long time. After marriage, NQ served as a soldier in Semarang and DK worked as a teacher in Pekalongan.

Though they were friends since childhood, it did not guarantee in understanding each other well and not ensure smooth communication between them. Tolerance was still needed to be built between

them. They both felt calm, safe and calm when gathered (on Saturdays and Sundays). When they gathered, NQ felt complete as a father of a family and DK functioned as a wife.

In sexual life, NQ felt that his wife was rather conservative; therefore NQ asked his wife to be more aggressive by watching blue-movie. However, the movie unexpectedly lowered DK's "appetite", because DK found it disgusting.

In conflict situations, they both preferred to quiet each other and to avoid greeting, with the intention of giving the opportunity for each party to cool off and introspection. Ice-melting was done by exchanging SMS. The biggest conflict that they ever experienced was when DK found her husband NQ chatting on the phone with a woman with vulgar words. In fact, NQ was solely playful for the sexual fantasy.

Theoretically, infidelity is carried out by NQ to filling lonely and also to get the thing which he cannot obtain from his wife DK. Infidelity can also occur because of the disharmony in sexual relations between husband and wife (Ginanjar, 2009). Because of the disharmony in sexual life, NQ chose to vent his sexual desires with the other women who could be found more easily.

In general, it can be stated that the NQ felt quite satisfied with his marriage, while DK was dissatisfied mainly because of the other women as a repellent lonely in her husband's life.

On the subject of Couple 3 (MZ-DW), the age difference between the two was pretty much, more than 11 years. The considerable age was in fact favorable to them, because MZ was more "nurturing" and DW more respectful to her husband, who was much older. They both also had a tolerance which was quite large, so if there was a conflict then they would discuss together to get an understanding and acceptance.

The problem that often arouse was to care 6 children, and the large living cost which spent a lot of money and encouraged them to borrow from relatives. MZ was considered less control towards their children from DW's point of view. MZ who lived far away from his family could not control directly the progress of his children. Moreover, there are differences in the education way between MZ and DW. MZ as a member of the TNI tended to be hard and

emphasizing discipline, while DW was more permissive. The permissiveness was actually caused by parenting that really exhausted her. This difference was the source of conflict between MZ and DW, because of inconsistencies in educating children. The discipline instilled periodically by MZ was not impressed by children because the discipline education was not backed up by DW.

What MZ and DW experience is in line with the opinion of Gichinga (Kariuki, 2014) which states that the absence of parents in daily life can lead to family problems due to dysfunction of family role. The child problem in Subject 3 made MZ blame DW on their children delinquency.

Like the other Subjects, the third pair also claimed to feel safe, comfortable and calm when they got together. When they came together, DW could feel a little "spoiled" to her husband, and rested in managing home and children. The difference with the previous pairs was that the couple relatively trusted each other. DW believed MZ because the person was not adventurous and open in terms of financial and communication tools (cell phones). MZ believed DW because DW seemed busy with household affairs, and certainly had no chance to do bad things. In addition, MZ saw that DW was a simple person and committed to the marriage.

In sexual life, they felt satisfied with each other. MZ and DW could openly express their needs. Personally, MZ admitted that sometimes biological insistence was irresistible. He sometimes channeled by masturbation or "hooking", but it was based on the desire to remain committed to the family. It was done just to fulfill biological needs.

Mostly, it can be said that the MZ feels satisfied with his marriage alive, because he has a wife who settles many problems, while DW was unhappy at being a huge workload and financial aspects that are often troublesome.

As the summary of the three pairs of subjects, all the wives feel less satisfied with their marriage from different aspects. On the other hand, the husbands all state that they are quite satisfied with their marriages. DA and DK sensed unhappiness due to problems with another woman in their husband's life, while DW feels unhappy on the financial aspects as well as the workload of a large household.

Laswell (Julinda, 2010, 1-17) suggests that one of the elements of communication in marriage is the ability to trust each other between the spouses (ability to trust). In the case of DK who did not have a high passion in sexual intercourse, and even decreased when she watched blue-films brought by her husband, and this led to the marital dissatisfaction. The marital dissatisfaction grew higher when DK knew that her husband had another woman. Spouses (in this case of DK) that are constantly urged to be more aggressive in sex will lead to discomfort and may affect marital satisfaction (Wald, 2012)

As for DW, the dissatisfaction is caused by the daily hassle of taking care of many children and blamed by the husband. This is consistent with Forste (Larasati, 2012), which suggests that the wife who has the heavy responsibility and large role will experience anxiety and dissatisfaction which affect the marriage. This is because the problems encountered will be minimized if they can be shared with her husband.

Different from the wives who state dissatisfaction in marriage, the husband of subjects 1 and 3 (IS, and MZ) actually feel satisfied in their marriage. Subjects 1 and 3 both feel that the marriage of this distance makes them feel not saturated and there is also a different feeling with traditional partner. IS also said that he thought the problem of jealousy was normal and not burdensome. According to Satiadarma (2001), the aspect that causes infidelity from psychological factors is the moral aspect. Infidelity has different relative meaning to everybody in that infidelity is viewed differently from different assessment.

For the subject 2, NQ was not so satisfied in marriage, only in the course of sexual relations, while other aspects were satisfied. Sexual needs are not met properly can result in marital dissatisfaction. One aspect of marital satisfaction according to Saxton (Indrijati, 2011) is the sexual aspect. NQ's desire was clearly not realized because the expectation for DK to be more aggressive could not be obtained. Mc Charty (Wald, 2012) suggests that a good sexual life is marked by a sense of comfort between husband and wife in intimate things.

In addition, NQ also sensed anxiety in the long-distance marriage that made him wary of

leaving his wife. This is consistent with the statement of Pistole that the distance between husband and wife is not likely to make each husband and wife feels anxious, which should not be felt by married couples (Pistole, 2012).

CONCLUSION

From interviews and observations of the commuter partner marriage, findings are among others:

1. Almost all the husband state quite satisfied with his marriage. Only is Subject 2 less satisfied, on aspects of sexual intercourse which he considers less aggressive.

2. All the wives feel less satisfied toward marriage, although differing in its aspects. Subjects 1 and 2 are not happy because their husbands have the other women to satisfy their sexual needs, while Subject 3 is less satisfied on the financial aspects as well as the heavy workload for taking care of 6 children.

3. All subjects man / husband of cheating with another woman. Infidelity of subject 1 and 2 is known by their wives and creating conflicts and dissatisfaction, while the third subject will do infidelity only at certain times (when unbearable)..

REFERENCES

- Beck, J. (2013, December 13) Study: Long distance relationship can work. March 14, 2016 downloaded from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archives/2013/12/study-long-distance-relationship-can-work/282317/>
- Ben-Zeev, A. (2013, January 22). Are Commuter Marriages good marriages? Downloaded: March 14, 2016, from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/in-the-name-love/2013/01/are-commuter-marriages-good-marriages>
- Dahl, M. (2013, July 18). Long distance love may be stronger than you think, a new study says. Accessed January 30, 2016, from: <http://www.today.com/health/long-distance-love-may-be-stronger-than-you-think-new-study-6C10660702>
- Darahim, A. (2015). Membina keharmonisan dan ketahanan keluarga (Fostering harmony and family resilience). Jakarta : Institute Pembelajaran Gelar Hidup (IPGH).
- Dewi, N.K. (2013). Commuter marriage :Ketika berjauhan menjadi sebuah keputusan (When apart into a decision) Jakarta : IPB Press.
- Dewi, N.K. & Sudhana, H. (2013). Hubungan antara komunikasi interpersonal pasutri dengan keharmonisan dalam pernikahan (The relationship between interpersonal communication couples with marital harmony). Jurnal Psikologi Udayana, I (1), 22-31.
- Djamal, M. (2015).Paradigma penelitian kualitatif (Edisi Revisi).The paradigm of qualitative research (Revised Edition).Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Ginjar, A.S. (2009). Proses healing pada istri yang mengalami perselingkuhan suami (The process of healing on his wife who had a husband's infidelity). Makara, Sosial Humaniora, 13 (1), 66-76. commuter marriage). Diploma thesis, University of Padjadjaran.
- Julinda, L.M. (2010). Gambaran kepuasan pernikahan istri pada pasangan commuter marriage (Overview wife marital satisfaction in couples commuter marriage). Laporan penelitian. Medan: Fakultas Psikologi Sumatra Utara, 1 – 17.
- Kariuki, J.W. (2014). The impact of long distance marriage on the family: A study of families with spouses abroad in Kiambu county. (Master research project). University of Nairobi, Anniversary towers, Kenya.
- Knox, D. (2016) M & F: Marriage and family (3rd Edition). Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Larasati, A. (2012) Kepuasan perkawinan pada istri ditinjau dari keterlibatan suami dalam menghadapi tuntutan ekonomi dan pembagian peran dalam rumah tangga (Marriage Satisfaction on a wife in terms of husband involvement to face the demands of the economy and the role division in the household).Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan dan Perkembangan, 1 – 6.
- Moleong, L.J. (2012). Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Edisi revisi) (Qualitative

research methodology (revised edition)).
Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.

Pamer, M. (2013, August 14). Long commuter take a toll on marriages, relationship, study finds. Accessed January 31, 2016, from:
<http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/long-commuter-take-toll-marriage-relationship-study-219612751.html>

Setiadarma, M.P. (2001) Menyikapi perselingkuhan (In response to the Infidelity). Jakarta: Pustaka Populer Obor.

Swastiningsih, F.L. (2014). Manajemen stress pada istri yang mengalami long distance marriages (Management of stress on the wife who experienced long distance marriages). *Empathy, Journal of the Faculty of Psychology*, Vol 2, No. 2, 53-61.

Wald, B.M. (2010). Sexual desire and satisfaction: The balance between individual and couple factors. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 310-321.

Walgito, B. (2010). *Bimbingan & Konseling Perkawinan (Guidance & Counseling on Marriage)*. Yogyakarta: Andi.