**Marital Satisfaction Among Dual-Earner Marriage Couples: Commuter Couples versus Single Residences Couples**

**Abstract**

As the phenomena of the dual-earner marriages increases, couples begin to choose to look for jobs in distant locations to earn higher income and pursue better career. Couples who live in two different geographical locations for occupational reasons, then meet at a specific time duration, known as commuter marriage couples. The aim of this study is examined marital satisfaction of married individuals, both men and women in two types of dual-earner couples. The sample consisted of members of 99 commuter marriage couples and 140 single-residence dual-earner couples were compared on measures of marital satisfaction. The result indicated the significant effect of commuter couples and single-residence couples to marital satisfaction. Commuter marriage couples in this study reported lower marital satisfaction compared to single-residence dual-earner couples. There was also significant effect of gender to marital satisfaction. Women in this study reported lower marital satisfaction compared to men. Interaction between dual-earner residence (commuter couples and single-residence couples) and gender had no significant effect on marital satisfaction.

**Keywords**

Commuter marriage, dual-earner, marital satisfaction

**Introduction**

The phenomenon of dual-earner couples continues to increase with the changing times and point of view in marriage. In the past, marriage was traditionally seen in which two heterosexual couples were legally married in the eyes of the law, so the husband acted as a sole breadwinner and authority holder in the family, while the wife stayed home and took care of the child (Macklin, 1987; Knox & Schacht, 2010). Economic issues and gender equality play roles in changing attitudes and perceptions of the working married women (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2009). There are values emerged, that couples have the same rights to develop their own career based on their passion and potential. This issue occurs evenly in the worldwide society, not least in Indonesia. Marriage couples, whose both husband and wife have an occupation, known as dual-earner couples. On the 2010 Population and Housing Census, United Nations for Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) Indonesia (2015) has forecast the increasing number of dual-earner marriage couples in Indonesia.

According to The Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (2016), the composition of women workers in 2012 to 2016 fluctuate. In general, women workers proportion increased slightly from 38% in 2012 to 38.3% in 2016. This result allegedly due to the increasing number of women who have higher education and increased living costs, so that traditional family model which only men who become the sole breadwinner, is slowly no longer relevant. Steil (2009) defines dual-earner couples as a couple whose both partners have income, as well as live a household together. A significant aspect of dual-earner couples is designated as dual career, which both partners have a desire to pursue a better career path, by way of life commitment to their work (Steil, 2009).

To pursue a better career path and higher achievement, a few couples decided to work in a places far apart, especially for couples from the suburban area. Even more, now the facilities and accommodations are adequate for couples to have high mobility. In spite of decide to migrate for work reasons, some decide to stay apart because one of the couples still pursuing career in the primary family residence. The increasing number of working married women take a role in these distance relationships more decent and necessary (Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000; Smits, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2003). Working married women who are establishing her careers, tend to not follow or stay in their husband’s employment location (Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000).

Dual-earner couples in which partners spend time apart maintaining separate residence due to their work demands for at least part of the week, has known by the term ‘commuter marriage’ (Lee, 2018; Bergen, 2010; Sandow, 2014; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). In daily life, one of the couples lives close to his or her workplace for a certain duration, and returns to the primary residence at the appointed time. For example, during the weekday stay close to the workplace, while the weekend back to the primary residence. The commuting lifestyle involves the establishment of a second residence, not just staying in a hotel or other temporary accommodations. The choice of a commuter partnership automatically implies dual residences situation, which has significant impacts on the daily-life experiences of the partners, both individually and as part of a couple or family (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Green, Hogarth, & Shackleton, 1999; Van der Klis & Mulder, 2008). While some couples, the commuting lifestyle is a temporary situation, but others have to live and adapt this lifestyle for more long-term.

Studies related to this topic have identified the advantages and disadvantages faced by those who are trying to live as commuter marriage couples. Foremost among the advantages they recognize is the obvious freedom this lifestyle grants to each spouse to continue working at what he/she deems important enough to occasion the decision to live apart in the first place (Gross, 1980). Closely connected with this benefit is the freedom to dedicate long and uninterrupted hours at their workplace (Gross, 1980). Commuter marriage couples allow both partners to pursue their careers equally. In a sense commuter marriage couples obtained their jobs for financial gains (Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000).

Although commuting lifestyle has its benefits, but still numerous challenges can make the commuting lifestyle problematic, especially in the context of relationships (Holmes, 2014; Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2012; Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000). The disadvantages include the pressures of manage time and energy due to balancing between family and work, different from the norms of society related to marriage situation, lack of understanding from others relating the difficulties faced, and lack of time to do many things together with spouse or family (Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2012; Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000; McBride & Bergen, 2014). Commuter marriage couples reported less satisfied with their relationship and less satisfied with their family life (Bunker, Zubek, Vanderslice, & Rice, 1992). Even more, when commuter marriage couples are retaining reassemble time more than a month, each individual is starting to make different separate world form each other (Rhodes, 2002). The quality of their marriage begins to fade, also their relationship no longer provides security and stability to their lives.

In fact, the dual-earner couples itself already has a risk to the marital relationship (Doumas, Margolin, & John, 2008). Being employers and marriage couples simultaneously challenges the commuter marriage couple’s ability to maintain satisfaction in marriage life, especially if there is a geographical distance in between. When individuals, are both married and work, then the demands to divide the role in the daily-life experience will increase, which have the potential to create conflict. Work can bring the negative impact on the family (ie, work-to-family conflict), and the opposite of the family can negatively impact the work (ie, family-to-work conflict) (Yucel, 2017). The mechanism for how they balance work-family conflict (Powell & Fine, 2009, Yucel, 2017) and their gender ideology (Minnotte, Minnote, & Pedersen, 2013) associated to marital satisfaction.

Though marital satisfaction is a predictor of marriage lasted stable and survive (Lamanna & Redmann, 2009). Marital satisfaction itself, define as the extent to which couples are content and fulfilled in their relationship (DeGenova, 2008). Marital satisfaction found as an important thing in marriage, that can predict the stability in marriage life. In addition to being a predictor of marital stability, marital satisfaction is also an important component of the major aspects of life, such as personal well-being (Olson, DeFrain, & Skogrand, 2011) and physical health (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003). On the other hand, marital dissatisfaction has lot of bad consequences on a person. Marital dissatisfaction has been associated with decreased job satisfaction, decreased health, and adverse consequences for child development (Brock & Kochanska, 2015; Rogers & May, 2003; South & Krueger, 2013).

The increasing number of commuter marriage couples occur, with a variety of challenges that potentially affect marital satisfaction make this topic relevant for research. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, study about commuter marriage couples are still lacking, especially related to marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, majority of researches with similar topics are qualitative research and some of them focused on the wife (Arumrasmi & Karyono, 2013; Azizah & Karyono, 2015; Nasiti & Wismanto, 2017; Lutfiyah & Stanislaus, 2017). In other words, research on this topic still relies on the subjectivity of participants with varying results. In a study of Nasiti and Wismanto (2017) on three commuter marriage couples, two of three husbands claimed satisfied with their marriage, while one husband claimed to be dissatisfied with his marriage. On the three wives claimed to be dissatisfied with their marriage. Two wives complain about the issue of infidelity in their marriage, where husbands cheating on them (Nasiti & Wismanto, 2017).

The results of qualitative study of the commuter marriage in Indonesia, indicate wives have feelings of sadness and loneliness (Arumrasmi & Karyono, 2013; Simatupang, 2017), and lack of sexual intercourse, as well as increased costs for communication (Azizah & Karyono, 2015). In addition, those participants also feel their married life not normal, because they have to stay apart from the couple most of the time (Arumrasmi & Karyono, 2013). These findings can be emphasized that commuter marriage is hard and challenging, that pose a risk to the conditions of marital satisfaction.

Further research about marital satisfaction on commuter marriage couples would enhance understanding of this marriage life condition. The purpose of this study to reveal about marital satisfaction on commuter marriage couple as a bigger picture, also compare it with dual-earner couples who live single residence. In this study, we have three research hypotheses. First, we hypothesize that there exists an effect of the dual-earner’s residence (commuter or single-residence) on marital satisfaction. Second, we hypothesize that there exists an effect of gender on marital satisfaction. Finally, we hypothesize that there exists an effect of the dual-earner’s residence and gender on marital satisfaction.

**Marital Satisfaction on Commuter Marriage Couples and the Aspects Influenced It**

In former studies of commuter marriage couples, Gerstel and Gross (1984) tried to discover the most unfailing marriage conditions with this commuter marriage arrangement. Gerstel and Gross (1984) suggest that older couples, those have been married for longer period of time, those among whom at least one spouse has a settled career, and those who are free from parenting responsibilities may find the lifestyle less stressful. However, couples who have children at home face the most challenges with the commuter arrangement (Rhodes, 2002). Gerstel and Gross (1984) defined two groups of commuter marriage couples based of those factors, i.e. adjusting couples and established couples.

Adjusting couples roughly correspond to younger married and couples are still becoming established in their careers. As marital partners, their sharing experience together have not been long enough to be able to cultivate feelings of trust built by a long shared history (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Rhodes, 2002; Holmes 2014). Simultaneously, these young couples have to strife over career growth. This condition is considered vulnerable to dissatisfaction with marriage. Whereas established couples have a well-established marriage with one or both spouses well-established in their careers, and usually have grown or nearly-grown children. These couples have had overcome previous difficulties together, and they tended to have a strong bond to overcome the present problems of commuting lifestyle (Rhodes, 2002). Furthermore, the grown or nearly-grown children that they have, do not require more intensive care. Not having childrearing and parenting responsibilities give the couple more flexibility, less distress, and less social pressure while commuting (Rhodes, 2002).

Another aspect that has a role in marriage satisfaction, is gender differences. Gender differences can be traced internally and externally, both of which have influence respectively. Related internal individuals, emotional aspects of women are an important determinant, which can cause women perceived commuter marriage as a treat to their marriage (Sandow, 2014; McBride & Bergen, 2014). It is referring to norms, that marriage as source of intimacy on close relationship. In commuting situation, women may miss the emotional protection that they expected from the concept spouse and they sense that this is the cost of their gain in independence (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Nevertheless, women who have been through commuter marriage for longer times, run a lower risk of seeing their marriage damaged (Sandow, 2014), than men seeing their relationship. This can be due to a better adaptability of women compared to men to the commuting lifestyle (Sandow, 2014). Women, who have a non-traditional way of viewing marriage, more independent, and high career orientation, will better appreciate their commuter marriage better (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Sandow, 2014, Jackson et al., 2000).

Related to external elements, values and believes of society can also influence gender-related understanding in marriage of commuter couples. In society, there is a prevailing cultural norm of what particular marital relationship should be like, and they perceive to be normative marital relationships (McBride & Bergen, 2014). Women in commuter marriages, will struggle a gap between her marriage conditions and cultural norms (Bergen 2010; McBride & Bergen, 2014). It is referring to the norm that women are full-time housewife, main part of the domestic chores and childcare (Sandow, 2014), not living somewhere for working. The more they validate this values into their marriage, the more they feel dissatisfied with their marriage.

**Methods**

*Participant*. The participants in the study are dual-earner marriage couples, who were commuting and live in single-residence. Commuting participant are individual members of a couple in which one of the partners regularly spends at least two nights a week in a separately maintained permanent residence due work demands. Single-residence dual-earner participants are members of a couple living in the same residence on a daily basis. Couples have been married under these conditions for at least a year. No job-related restrictions, participants can be office employees, entrepreneurs, or other workers. Minimum education of participants is senior high school.

The sample consisted of members of 99 commuting and 140 single-residence dual-earner couples. The subjects are 109 men (39 commuters and 70 members of single-residence dual-earner couples) and 130 women (60 commuters and 70 members of single-residence dual-earner couples).

*Procedure*. At the beginning of the research process, the researcher submits the ethics review form to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia. After obtaining approval for the ethical review, the next stage is the search for research participants. Participant search is done by distributing posters online through various media, such as Whatsapp Messenger, Line Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The poster distribution period contains the research registration link starting from 8 April 2018 to 7 May 2018. Any applicant who meets the criteria will be contacted again using email, requesting willingness to be a research participant, and given a link of measurement. Applicants who are willing to become participants can click on the link and fill out the questionnaire online.

*Demographic section*.This section required participants to give information about basic demographic information, including age, gender, residence (single-residence or commuter) education, religion, occupation, ethnicity, month salary, length of marriage, and how many children they have.

*Measure*. To measure marital satisfaction, researchers used the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) measurements developed by Funk and Rogge (2007). The CSI were developed using eight self-report measuring instruments on relationship satisfaction, including Marital Adjustment Test (1959) and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976), and additional 75 potential items (Funk & Rogge, 2007). At the development stage, CSI is tested to 5,315 participants online. The reliability testing with Cronbach Alpha show coefficients 0.98. In addition, CSI has a correlation coefficient of 0.91 with DAS and MAT. This proves that CSI has a strong convergence validity with other relationship satisfaction. However, when compared with the scale used earlier, CSI shows greater precision and power to detect the degree of satisfaction in relationships. The CSI has two versions, 32 versions and 16 items. In this study, researchers will use CSI version 16 items in Bahasa Indonesia. This Bahasa Indonesia version CSI measure has been used previously in thesis research in 2016 at Faculty of Psychology University of Indonesia (Faisal, 2016). Based on validity testing, CSI 16 items show better internal consistency than CSI 32 items (Faisal, 2016). The CSI 16 item validity test shows the range of internal consistency values ​​in the range 0.361 - 0.722 (Faisal, 2016). For this research study, the reliability and internal consistency analysis was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument. The results of the reliability testing of CSI 16 items with Cronbach Alpha show value of 0.945. The internal consistency value of this 16 item CSI is in the range of 0.627 to 0.879. These testing show good results, so CSI 16 items can be used in this study.

*Data Analysis.* To test the research hypotheses, the researchers use factorial ANOVA. The purpose of factorial ANOVA is to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups based on mean values. Factorial ANOVA allows researchers to process dependent variable of continuous scale and two or more independent variables of categorical scale. The use of the Factorial ANOVA technique seeks to see two or more independent variables varying separately or interacting with each other to produce variations in the dependent variable (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). We analysis examines the effect of dual-earner type (commuter and single-residence) and gender on marital satisfaction.

**Results**

*Demographic characteristics*

Demographically, age range of participants are from 18 to 52 years old (M = 30.53; SD = 5.291). Based on education level, the participants held high-school grade are 11 participants (4.6%), diploma’s degree are 21 participants (8.8%), bachelor's degree are 173 participants (72.4%), master degree are 33 participants (13.8%), and doctorate degree is 1 participant (0.4%). This data shows that most of the participants held bachelor's degree.

Based on occupation, the three most types of occupation are private employee (101 participants; 42.3%), government employees (40 participants; 16.7%), and entrepreneur (38 participants; 15.9%). The classifications based on salary per month are Rp0 - Rp3.000.000 (51 participants; 21.3%), Rp3.000.000 - Rp7.500.000 (108 participants; 45.2%), Rp7.500.000 - Rp15.000.000 (56 participants; 23.4%), Rp15.000.000 - Rp25.000.000 (17 participants; 7.1%), and >Rp25.000.000 (7 participants; 2.9%).

Based on the length of marriage, we classified the participants to to 1-5 years (179 participants; 74.9%), 6-10 years (41 participants; 17.2%), 11-20 years (15 participants; 6.3%), and 21-36 years (4 participants; 1.7%). Based on number of children, 88 participants (36.8%) have no children, 114 participants (47.7%) have one child, 26 participants (10.9%) have two children, and 11 participants (4.6%) have 3 children. Summarizing from the length of the marriage and the number of children, most couples (74.9%) are at the age of marriage 1-5 years and have not had children or have one child.

Prior to the main analysis, the following data related to the distribution of marital satisfaction scores. The Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), that used to measure marital satisfaction has a cut-off score of 51,5 (Funk & Rogge, 2007). If the total score below the cut-off, it indicates that participants have dissatisfaction with their marriage. If the total score above the cut-off, it indicates that participants assess their marriage satisfying. We compared each participant total score of participants with cut-off of and grouped them into two categories of scores, which are dissatisfied and satisfied. All groups of participant tend to score above the cut-off. The results can be seen in Table 1.

**Tabel 1. Table of Marital Satisfaction Scores’ Distribution**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources** | **Gender** | **Categories** | **Range** | **Total participants** | **Percentage**  **(%)** |
| Commuter Marriage Couples | Man | Dissatisfied | < 51,5 | 1 | 0,4% |
| Satisfied | > 51,5 | 38 | 15,9% |
| Woman | Dissatisfied | < 51,5 | 6 | 2,5% |
| Satisfied | > 51,5 | 54 | 22,6% |
| Single-Residence Dual-Earner  Couples | Man | Dissatisfied | < 51,5 | 3 | 1,3% |
| Satisfied | > 51,5 | 67 | 28% |
| Woman | Dissatisfied | < 51,5 | 18 | 7,5% |
| Satisfied | > 51,5 | 52 | 21,8% |

***Dual-Earner’s Type and Marital Satisfaction***

Table 1 presents the results of data processing using ANOVA. The factorial ANOVA method showed that *dual-earner’s type* (commuter or single-residence) were statistically significant at the .05 significant level. The main effect for dual-earner’s type yielded an F ratio of F (1,235) = 4.284, P < .05, ɳ2 = .024, indicating a significant difference between commuter couples (M = 66.95, SD = 11.048) and single-residence couples (M = 63.75, SD = 10.989). Regarding from the mean score comparison, commuter couples tended to have a higher perception of marital satisfaction than dual-earner who live in same residence.

***Gender and Marital Satisfaction***

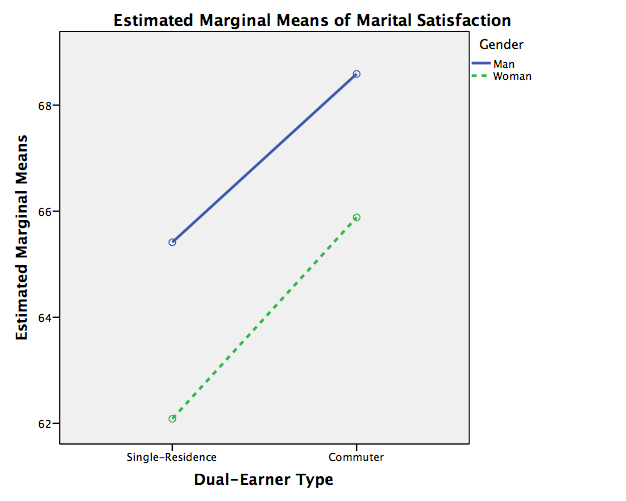
The factorial ANOVA method showed that gender was statistically significant at the .05 significant level. The main effect for gender yielded an F ratio of F (1,235) = 4.284, p < .05, ɳ2 = .018, indicating a significant difference between man (M = 66.55, SD = 9.399) and woman (M = 63.84, SD = 12.252). Regarding from the mean score comparison, man tended to have a higher perception of marital satisfaction than woman did.

***Dual-Earner’s Type, Gender, and Marital Satisfaction***

The factorial ANOVA method showed that interaction residence (commuter or single-residence) and gender had no significant effect on marital satisfaction (F (1,235) = .046, p = .831). Even though, interaction between the two didn’t reveal any effect on marital satisfaction, we still analyze the patterns of the mean scores. Based on the mean score, the commuter couples have a higher mean score of marital satisfaction than the dual-earner single-residence couples. In addition, men have a higher mean score of marital satisfaction than women. That way, the group that has the highest average marital satisfaction score is the man who underwent commuter marriage. Meanwhile, the lowest marital satisfaction scores are women who underwent dual-earner single-residence marriage. For more detail see on Figure 1.

**Table 2. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Type III Sum of Squares** | **df** | ***Mean Square*** | **F** | **Sig.** | **Partial Eta Squared** |
| Dual Earner’s Type | 686.010 | 1 | 686.010 | 5.719 | .018 | .024 |
| Gender | 513.847 | 1 | 513.847 | 4.284 | .040 | .018 |
| Dual Earner’s Type and Gender | 5.461 | 1 | 5.461 | .046 | .831 | .000 |
| Error | 28188.091 | 235 | 119.949 |  |  |  |
| Total | 1041459.000 | 239 |  |  |  |  |



***Figure 1*. Estimated Marginal Means of Marital Satisfaction**

**Discussions**

This study attempts to prove the effect of living conditions on dual-earner on marital satisfaction, specifically emphasizing the commuter marriage phenomenon. In this study, researchers compared two groups of data from commuter marriage couple and dual-earner single residence. In addition, researchers also include gender roles. The results showed that the condition of commuter and dual-earner single residence significantly influence of the marital satisfaction. Based on the dispersion of mean score on commuter and single-residence couples, it was found that commuter marriage couples were more satisfied with their marriages than single-residence couples. This finding is interesting to discuss, because in studies prior to commuter marriage conditions were associated with dissatisfaction with marital satisfaction (Rhodes, 2002), as well as various problems in marital relationships (Jackson et al., 2000; Arumrasmi & Karyono, 2013; Azizah & Karyono, 2015; Simatupang, 2017). The following reasons may explain this finding.

The single-residence dual-career couples experienced themselves as being more overloaded than did the commuters (Bunker et al., 1992). By being together in a single residence, couples will interact directly each day. When a husband or wife experiences fatigue or stress at work, they tend to bring the negative mood to the home and have an impact when interacting with a partner. This is known as emotional spillover. Zvonkovic & Peters (2009) define emotional spillover as “*how emotional experiences at work can be carried into the worker’s after-work relationships*”.

When negative emotions from the workplace are brought to home, it will affect the interaction conditions of couples at home, which leads to a negative interaction. The results of the study indicate that the arguments that occur at home may be influenced by arguments that occur in the workplace (Córdova & Harp, 2009). In addition, when the husband has stress at the workplace, he might have a withdrawal tendency when interacting with his partner (Zvonkovic & Peters, 2009). However, this does not directly happen to commuters who live far apart. As Bunker et al. (1992) said, “*perhaps there is some arrangements in the commuter marriage couple that simplifies life or perceptions and allowing commuters to keep work life and family life in well-balanced*.”

Furthermore, the results showed that gender significantly influence of the marital satisfaction. Based on the dispersion of mean score on man and woman, it was found that men were more satisfied with their marriages than women. The traditional belief that it is better for men to earn the money in the family and women to take care of the home and children has changed over time (Helgeson, 2016). In contrast to her husband, when a married woman works, then she tends to add a new role besides being a housewife. Women should divide their time to work, do domestic chores, and take care of the children. This allegedly causes women's marital satisfaction is lower when compared with men among dual-earner couples. Moreover, women are employed out of economic necessity rather than her choice, they are less satisfied with their marriage (Perry-Jenkins, Seery, & Crouter, 1992).

However, the interaction between dual-earner and gender is not significantly influenced in marital satisfaction. This result has similar result to research study byBunker et al., (1992), that found no significant interactions of dual-earner residence with gender on any of our satisfaction or stress measures (Bunker et al., 1992). This absence of dual-earner residence and gender interactions indicates that the general pattern of benefits and costs of the different dual-earner lifestyles held for both male and female respondents.

Particularly in commuter marriage couples, the interaction between commuter and gender do not have influence marital satisfaction significantly. Researchers suspect other aspects that have a significant influence on the condition of commuter marriage and marital satisfaction. Aspects that are suspected of having influence are the number of children, the distance difference, and duration of the meeting. We suggested that in subsequent research, these aspects can be considered as research variables.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This research can add new information related commuter marriage in Indonesia, which is considered lack of studies. In addition, the findings of this study are provide understanding to the society regarding the conditions of the commuter marriage. The results show that individuals who undergoing commuter marriage feel satisfied with their marriage.

This research still has the limitations, that can be improve by the next research. First, technically, we only do the data retrieval online. This condition may make the sampled characteristics similar enough, such as socio-economic conditions, education, employment, etc. With diverse sample characteristics expected to produce richer data.

Second, we did not deicide definite boundaries to marriage commuter spouses based on distance differences and meeting duration intervals. If there is a definite boundary regarding the difference in distance and time of the meeting, then the categories of the marriage commuter pair will be more clear when processed. this data allegedly has affected to marital satisfaction on commuter marriage couples.

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