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

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**Abstract**

As the phenomena of the dual-earner marriages increases, couples begin to choose to look for jobs in distant locations to earn a better career and higher income. Couples who live in two different geographical locations for occupational reasons, then meet at a specific time duration, known as commuter marriage couple. This study examined the marital satisfaction of women and men in two types of dual-earner couples. Individuals from 99 commuting and 140 single-residence dual-earner couples were compared on measures of marital satisfaction. There were significant effect of commuting and single-residence dual-earner 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 or single-residence) 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. Whereas 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 a role in changing attitudes and perceptions of the wives who work (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2009). There’s a value which recognizes each spouse's right to pursue rewarding and self-actualizing pursuits. This issue occurs evenly in the worldwide society, not least 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.

Marriage couples, who husband and wife work is known as dual-earner couple. Steil (2009) defines dual-earner couples as those in which both partners are employed for pay while simultaneously maintaining a family life together. A significant subset of dual-earner couples is designated as dual career, which both heads of households pursue high-status occupations characterized by lifelong commitment and an opportunity structure that allows the expectation of advancement (Steil, 2009). To pursue a good career path and higher achievement, then not a few couples decided to work in a place 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, there are couples who decide to migrate for work reasons, some decide to stay apart because one of the couples still have a career in the primary family residence. The development of professional careers for more married women makes these new distance relationships more possible and necessary (Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000; Smits, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2003). It’s because women are establishing careers and are not as likely to follow or remain in the locality of their husband’s employment (Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000). Dual-earner couple in which the spouses live separately for at least part of the week due to their work demands, has known by the term ‘commuter marriage’ (Lee, 2018; Bergen, 2010; Sandow, 2014; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). The term ‘commuter marriage’ was first introduced by Gerstel & Gross (1984). Gerstel and Gross use term of ‘commuter marriage’, that is adopted by dual-earner couples, where necessary to maintain both their careers, because capitalist employment does not in fact assume a mobile nuclear family but prefers mobile (Holmes, 2014).

Here, one partner lives near his or her work for part of the time and away from the primary family residence. The commuter lifestyle involves the establishment of a second home, not just staying in a hotel or other temporary accommodation. The choice of a commuter partnership automatically implies a dual residence situation, which has a significant impact 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 have to handle the consequences of commuting temporarily, for only a number of years, others will face and even adapt to a more long-term commuting lifestyle.

Studies related to this topic have identified the benefits and disadvantages faced by those who are trying to live as a commuter marriage partner. 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 devote long and uninterrupted hours to their work (Gross, 1980). Commuter marriage couples allow for both partners to privilege their careers equally. Then, commuter marriage couples obtained their jobs for financial gains and employee benefits that assisted or enhanced family goals as well as for personally fulfilling work (Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000).

Although it has its advantages, numerous challenges can make the commuting lifestyle difficult, especially in the context of relationships (Holmes, 2014; Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2012; Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000). The challenges included the pressures of dividing time and energy in a balanced way between the demands of family and career, feeling lonely, lack of understanding from other people regarding 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). Commuter marriage couples reported less satisfied with their relationship with their partner and less satisfied with their family life (Bunker, Zubek, Vanderslice, & Rice, 1992). In similar opinion, McBride & Bergen (2014) said commuter marriage viewed as out of the norm, at best, and a risk to marital and family relationships, at worst.

Being employers and marriage couples simultaneously challenges the commuter marriage couple’s ability to maintain satisfaction in marriage life, especially there is a geographical distance in between. Though marital satisfaction is a predictor of marriage lasted stable and survive mereka (Lamanna & Redmann, 2009). Marital satisfaction itself, defined as the extent to which couples are content and fulfilled in their relationship (DeGenova, 2008). Marital satisfaction was 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 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 can have many 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).

In Indonesia, research related to commuter marriage couples are still lacking, especially related to marital satisfaction. The increasing number of women workers, the more likely the commuter marriage couples are also increasing, so the topic is relevant for research. Meanwhile, majority of researches with similar topics are qualitative research (Arumrasmi & Karyono, 2013; Azizah & Karyono, 2015; Nasiti & Wismanto, 2017; Lutfiyah & Stanislaus, 2017), so the results of the research sample cannot be generally generalized. Further research about marital satisfaction on commuter marriage couples would enhance understanding of this marriage life condition of commuter marriage couples. The purpose of this study was 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 the earlier studies of commuter couples, Gerstel and Gross (1984) tried to discover the most unfailing marriage conditions with this commuter marriage arrangement. The summary from researches, they suggest that older couples, those married longer, those among whom at least one spouse has an established career, and those who are freed from childrearing responsibilities may find the lifestyle less stressful (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Particularly, couples who have children at home face the most challenges with the commuter arrangement (Rhodes, 2002). Then, 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, adjusting couples have not been together long enough to see themselves as a solid reality or to have developed a trust based in a long, shared history (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Rhodes, 2002; Holmes 2014). Simultaneously, these young couples have to struggle over issues of 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 conquered previous obstacles, and their bond is strong enough to overcome the problems of commuting (Rhodes, 2002). Furthermore, the grown or nearly-grown children that they have, do not require more intensive care. Not having child care and parenting concerns gives the couple more freedom, less guilt, fewer worries, and less social pressure while commuting (Rhodes, 2002).

Another aspect that has a role in marriage satisfaction, which 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 to consider commuting as a threat to their relationship (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, those women commuting for many years run a lower risk of seeing their relationship broken (Sandow, 2014), than men seeing their relationship. It may be the case that these women manage better than men do to adjust to the commuting lifestyle. 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. Each society has a notion of what particular relationships should be like, and individuals within those societies use a variety of tactics to question what they perceive to be ‘‘non-normative’’ relationships (McBride & Bergen, 2014). Women in commuter marriages went to great lengths to account for the difference between their marriages and the cultural norm (Bergen 2010; McBride & Bergen, 2014). It is referring to norm that women should shoulder the main part of the domestic work and childcare and be the second wage-earner (Sandow, 2014), not living somewhere for working. The more they validate this values into their marriage, the more they feel dissatisfied with their marriage. In a research report, commuter marriage couples reported that others often thought they were getting divorced or having marital problems as indicated by intrusive questions about the commuting couples’ marital arrangement (Bergen 2010; McBride & Bergen, 2014).

**Methods**

*Participant*. The participants in the study were dual-earner marriage couples, who were commuting and live in single-residence. Commuting participant were 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 that is geographically distant from the other partner's residence. Single-residence dual-earner participants were 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 employee, entrepreneurs, or other work. 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 were 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, requested 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 employee (40 participants; 16.7%), and entrepreneur (38 participants; 15.9%). The classifications related 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 classify 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. If seen from the length of the marriage and the number of children, most couples are at the age of marriage 1-5 years and have not had children or have one child.

***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***

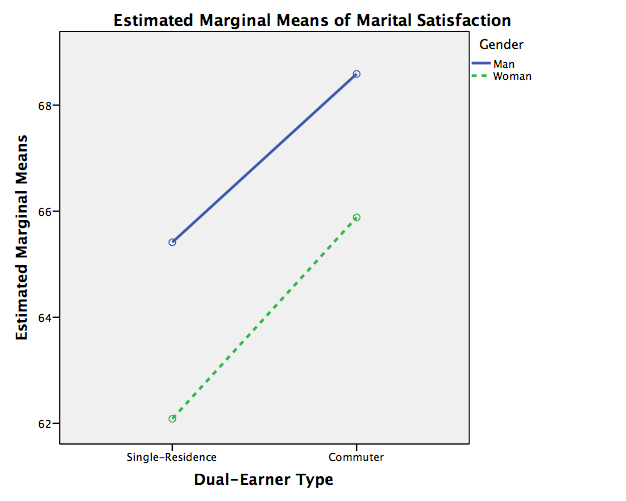
The factorial ANOVA method showed that gender was statistically significant at the .05 significant level. The main effect for gender yielded an F ratio of F (1,235) = 4.284, p < .05, ɳ2 = .018, indicating a significant difference between man (M = 66.55, SD = 9.399) and woman (M = 63.84, SD = 12.252). 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 1*. 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. Commuter marriage couples are more dissatisfied with their marriage can be caused by feeling overwhelmed. Bunker et al., (1992) found that single-residence dual-career couples experienced themselves as being more overloaded than did the commuters. Perhaps there is some restructuring in the commuting two-residence couple that simplifies life or perceptions and allowing commuters to keep work life and family life in well-separated spheres (Bunker et al., 1992).

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. These findings are consistent with the study results of Nasiti & Wismanto (2017), on three commuter marriages couples who have been married for five years and have at least one child, indicate that most of the subject of the husband feels quite satisfied with his marriage, while the entire subject wife is not satisfied with their marriage.

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-career family type with gender on any of our satisfaction or stress measures (Bunker et al., 1992). This absence of family type 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.

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