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

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# Marital Satisfaction in Dual-Earner Marriage: Single-Residence versus Commuter

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## Abstract

This study aimed to compare marital satisfaction in two types of dual-earner couples, namely, commuter and single-residence marriage couples. Commuter marriage couples live in two separate residences for at least part of the week because of work demands, whereas single-residence couples have the same residences. A sample of 239 couples filled out the Couple Satisfaction Index. A Factorial Analysis of Variance used to compare marital satisfaction in the two groups. Results showed that commuter marriage couples have higher marital satisfaction than single-residence dual-earner couples. The men in this study reported higher marital satisfaction than women.

## Keywords

Commuter marriage, dual-earner, gender, marital satisfaction

**M**arital satisfaction is a fundamental aspect in marriage life because it predicts marriage stability (Lamanna & Redmann, 2009). Marital satisfaction is the extent to which couples are content and fulfilled in their relationship (DeGenova, 2008). Marital satisfaction is related to other aspects of marriage, such as communication (Olson, DeFrain, & Skogrand, 2011), conflict resolution (Kurdek, 1995), dyadic coping (Herzberg, 2013), and parenting (Perry-Jenkins, Goldberg, Pierce, & Sayer, 2007). This aspect is also related to social and emotional support, which contribute to the physical, spiritual, and social well-being of couples (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Apart from the context of a relationship, a high marital satisfaction is related to enhance individual psychological and physical

health (Bookwala, 2009).

The discussion on marital satisfaction does not only include internal aspects of marriage. The roles of couples in their ecological domains have been related to marital satisfaction (Pedersen & Minnotte, 2012). In modern and urban society, marital satisfaction is often associated to the work aspect of couples. Marriage and work are two major aspects of a person's life. Many studies have shown the connection between the two. Some prior research has examined marital satisfaction related to employment status, income, and education level (Gong, 2007). On the one hand, research has linked marital satisfaction to social support from workplace colleague, workplace culture, and work-related time demands (Pedersen & Minnotte, 2012). On the other hand, studies have examined the relationships of provider role attitude, role overload, and housework with marital satisfaction (Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010). Furthermore, gender ideology has been related to role division and impacted the quality

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of marital satisfaction (Minnotte, Minnote, & Pedersen, 2013; Sun, et al., 2017). This study focuses on comparing marital satisfaction between different types of dual-earner residences, namely commuter and single-residence. In this study, the dual-earner type who live separately are called commuter marriage, whereas couples who continuously live under one roof are referred to as single-residence dual-earner marriage.

Research on related topics has continued to grow along with increasing dual-earner marriages worldwide, including in Indonesia. The United Nations for Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA) in Indonesia (2015) assumed an increase in dual-earner marriages in line with an increasing number of employed women. The Population Census data shows that employed female with 25-59 age groups increasing from 1990 to 2010, which is from 65.55% to 68.51% (UNFPA, 2015). The 2010 Population Census data also shows 72% married women are employees (UNFPA, 2015). This increase may be attributed to rises in the number of women with higher education and living costs (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2009), making traditional family models in which only men are breadwinners irrelevant. Gender equality helps change the attitudes and perceptions of working married women (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2009). Values in which couples have the same rights to develop their own careers based on their passion and potential have emerged. To pursue better career paths and higher achievements, some married couples decided to work in separate places, especially for couples from suburban areas. One of the reasons for staying apart is one of the couples still pursues a career in the primary family residence.

The decisions of both husband and wife to work would affect the dynamics of marital interaction. Being employed and married simultaneously challenge the dual-earner couple's ability to maintain satisfaction in married life, especially if there is a geographical distance in between. In dual-earner marriages, the amount of time allocated to household affairs is usually less than that of single-earner marriage. Balancing marriage and work is a topic that remains underexplored (Fellows, Chiu, Hill, & Hawkins, 2016). Workplace problems are very likely to be carried home, and vice versa (Van Steenberg et

al., 2014). If the problem is carried from the workplace to home, then it could also be felt by the partner and it could affect marital satisfaction.

In single-residence dual-earner marriages, husband and wife live side-by-side daily. The condition demands a role division in daily experiences, which could create conflict (Powell & Fine, 2009). These conflicts between roles are related to the roles of husband or wife and professional workers to earn money. Dual-earner marriages often face problems on schedule arrangement for family and work, fatigue, and other situations that disrupt family life (Ehrenberg, Gearing-Small, Hunter, & Small, 2001). The mechanism for balancing work-family conflict is associated to marital satisfaction (Powell & Fine, 2009, Yucel, 2017). Work could negatively impact family (i.e., work-to-family conflict), and family could negatively affect work (i.e., family-to-work conflict) (Yucel, 2017; Sun, McHale, Crouter, & Jones, 2017). Workplace pressure was also found to influence marital satisfaction level (Sun et al., 2017).

Commuter marriages automatically imply a dual-residence situation, which significantly impact the everyday life experiences of couples as individuals and as part of a couple or family (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Green, Hogarth, & Shackleton, 1999; Van der Klis & Mulder, 2008). The condition of commuter marriage was argued to reduce the frequencies of dissent and arguments between couples (Rhodes, 2002). This is because commuter marriage couples do not have as many activities together as those in single-residence. Furthermore, numerous challenges could make a commuting lifestyle problematic, especially in the context of relationships (Holmes, 2014; Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2012; Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000). Disadvantages include the pressure to balance time and energy between family and work, lack of time to do things together, and lack of understanding about problems faced by each spouse (McBride & Bergen, 2014; Jackson, Brown, Patterson-Stewart, 2000; Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2012).

Recent studies have revealed problematic conditions in dual-earner marriages, which could affect marital satisfaction. However, marital satisfaction in single-residence and commuter dual-earner marriages has not been compared

in previous research. This topic is important to study because the number of dual-earner marriages continues to increase, and marriage satisfaction is an important aspect of marriage. This study aimed to compare marital satisfaction on dual-earner marriages both in single-residences and commuters. We contrasted gender differences in marriage satisfaction. Based on the explanation above, we have three research hypotheses. First, we hypothesize marital satisfaction differs between commuter and single-residence dual-earner marriages. Second, we hypothesize that marital satisfaction differs between men and women in a dual-earner marriage status. Third, we hypothesize that the interaction between types of dual-earner marriage and gender affects marital satisfaction.

## Methods

*Participants.* The study participants are dual-earner marriage couples who commute and live in single-residences. Commuting participants are individual members of couples in which one of the partners regularly spends at least two nights a week in a separately maintained permanent residence due to work demands. Single-residence dual-earner participants are members of couples that live in the same residence daily. The couples have been married under these conditions for at least a year. The study has no job-related restriction, and participants may be office employees, entrepreneurs, or other workers. Minimum education of participants is senior high school.

The sample consisted of members of 99 commuters 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, we submitted the ethics review form to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia. After obtaining ethical clearance, we started to recruit research participants. We recruited participants by sending posters through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Line Messenger, and Whatsapp Messenger. The poster distribution period contained the re-

search registration link started from April 08, 2018 to May 07, 2018. Participants who met the criteria were requested to complete an online questionnaire.

*Demographic.* This section required participants to provide 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, we utilized the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) measurements developed by Funk and Rogge (2007). This index was developed using eight self-report measuring instruments on relationship satisfaction, including Marital Adjustment Test (1959) and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976), as well as additional 75 potential items (Funk & Rogge, 2007). At the development stage, CSI is tested on 5,315 participants online. The reliability testing with Cronbach Alpha showed a coefficient of 0.98. In addition, CSI has a correlation coefficient of 0.91 with DAS and MAT. In this study, we used the CSI version with 16 items in Bahasa Indonesia. This Bahasa Indonesia version CSI measure was used previously in a thesis conducted on 2016 in the Faculty of Psychology Universitas Indonesia (Faisal, 2016). Based on validity testing, the 16-item CSI showed better internal consistency than CSI with 32 items (Faisal, 2016). For this research, reliability and internal consistency analyses were conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability testing results of the 16-item CSI indicated a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.945. The internal consistency value of this CSI version ranged from 0.627 to 0.879.

*Data Analysis.* To test the research hypotheses, we used a Factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between two or more groups based on mean values. Factorial ANOVA allowed us to process continuous dependent variables and two or more categorical independent variables. The use of Factorial ANOVA technique determines whether two or more independent variables differ separately or whether they interact with each other to produce variations in the dependent variable (Kerlinger &

Table 1. Table of Marital Satisfaction Scores' Distribution

Sources	Gender	Categories	Range	Total participants	Percentage (%)
Commuter Marriage	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%
Dual-Earner Single-Residence	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%

Lee, 2000). We examined the effect of dual-earner type (commuter and single-residence) and gender on marital satisfaction.

## Results

### *Demographic characteristics*

The age of participants ranged from 18 to 52 years old ( $M = 30.53$ ;  $SD = 5.291$ ). In terms of education level, 11 participants have high school diplomas (4.6%), 21 have diploma degree (8.8%), 173 have bachelor's degree (72.4%), 33 have master degree (13.8%), and one has a doctorate degree (0.4%). This data shows that most participants held bachelor's degree.

Based on occupation, the top three types of occupation are private employees (101 participants; 42.3%), government employees (40 participants; 16.7%), and entrepreneurs (38 participants; 15.9%). The classifications based on salary per month are Rp 0–Rp 3,000,000 (51 participants; 21.3%), Rp 3,000,000–Rp 7,500,000 (108 participants; 45.2%), Rp 7,500,000–Rp 15,000,000 (56 participants; 23.4%), Rp 15,000,000–Rp 25,000,000 (17 participants; 7.1%), and > Rp 25,000,000 (7 participants; 2.9%).

Based on the length of marriage, we classified participants as 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%). In terms of the number of children, 88 participants (36.8%) have no children, 114 participants (47.7%) have 1 child, 26 participants (10.9%) have two children, and 11 participants (4.6%) have 3 children. Summarizing from the length of marriage and number of children, most couples (74.9%) are at the age of marriage 1–5 years and have either one child or

none.

The following data are related to the distribution of marital satisfaction scores. The CSI used to measure marital satisfaction has a cut-off score of 51.5 (Funk & Rogge, 2007). A total score below the cut-off indicates that participants are dissatisfied with their marriages. However, the total score above the cut-off shows that participants are satisfied with their marriages. All participant groups tended to score above the cut-off, which means that almost all of them were satisfied with their marriage. Results are shown in Table 1.

Prior to the main analysis, one of the requirements for ANOVA testing is the assumption of variance homogeneity in the dependent variables compared across several groups (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007), and thus, the results of statistical calculations are considered accurate. We used Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances to test the hypothesis that each variance error of the marital satisfaction variable would be equal across all groups. Results showed a significant value of  $p = 0.062$ . The  $p$  value obtained is greater than the value of Level of Significance 0.05. Thus, the variance of the pair type is equivalent or the variance is homogeneous; thus, ANOVA testing can be performed.

### *Dual-Earner's Resident Type and Marital Satisfaction*

Factorial ANOVA showed that *dual-earner's type* (commuter or single-residence) was statistically significant at 0.05 significant level. The main effect of the dual-earner's type yielded an  $F$  ratio of  $F(1,235) = 5.719$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.024$ , indicating a significant difference in the mean scores between participants from commuter ( $M =$

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				

Note. N=239, \* $p < .05$

66.95, SD = 11.048) and single-residence couples (M = 63.75, SD = 10.989). Participants from commuter couples have higher marital satisfaction than those from single-residence couples (Table 2).

### *Gender and Marital Satisfaction*

Factorial ANOVA indicated that gender was statistically significant at 0.05 significant level. The main effect for gender yielded an F ratio of  $F(1,235) = 4.284$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.018$ , indicating a significant difference in the mean scores between man (M = 66.55, SD = 9.399) and woman (M = 63.84, SD = 12.252). The mean score comparison showed that men tended to have higher marital satisfaction than women.

### *Dual-Earner's Type, Gender, and Marital Satisfaction*

Factorial ANOVA showed that the interaction effect of residence (commuter or single-residence) and gender has no significant effect on marital satisfaction [ $F(1,235) = 0.046$ ,  $p = 0.831$ ].

### **Discussion**

The study results showed that commuter and single-residence dual-earner marriages significantly influenced marital satisfaction. Participants from commuter marriages have higher marital satisfaction than those from single-residence dual-earner couples. This finding differs from prior studies that associated commuter marriages with marriage dissatisfaction (Rhodes, 2002) and various marital problems (Jackson et al., 2000; Arumrasmi & Karyono,

2013; Azizah & Karyono, 2015; Simatupang, 2017). As described by Powell and Fine (2009), the condition of dual-earner marriages can increase conflict in marital relationships compared with single-earner marriages. Dual-earner couples are often faced with problems with family and work schedule conflicts, fatigue, and other situations that interfere with family living conditions. When negative emotions from the workplace are brought home, they will negatively affect the interaction conditions of couples at home. Current findings indicate that domestic stress and problems may be influenced by job problems (Córdova & Harp, 2009). In addition, when husbands are stressed at work, they tend to withdraw from interacting with their partners (Zvonkovic & Peters, 2009). However, this finding does not directly occur in 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."

This study also showed that gender impacts marital satisfaction. Based on the dispersion of mean scores on men and women, men were found to be more satisfied with their marriages than women. The traditional belief that it is better for men to earn the money in the family and for women to take care of the home and children has evolved (Helgeson, 2016). In contrast to husbands, when married women work, they tend to add a new role to being a housewife. Women are expected divide their time to work, do domestic chores, and take care of the children. To balance these things, women are at greater risk of work-family conflict because of multiple roles. Moreover, women are employed out of economic necessity rather than choice, making them less sat-

isfied with their marriage (Perry-Jenkins, Seery, & Crouter, 1992).

The interaction between dual-earner and gender does not affect marital satisfaction. This result is similar to the research findings by Bunker et al. (1992), who found no significant interaction between dual-earner residence and gender on any satisfaction or stress measures (Bunker et al., 1992). The absence of dual-earner residence and gender interaction indicates the general pattern of benefits and costs of different dual-earner lifestyles held for both male and female respondents. The interaction of gender and dual-earner status with marital satisfaction is also affected by other aspects such as work-hour, work-pressure, and work self-direction (Sun, et al., 2017). For example, high work hours for women led to low marital satisfaction level. No significant relationship between work-hour and marital satisfaction was found among men.

In commuter marriages, the interaction between commuter and gender does not influence marital satisfaction significantly. We speculate that commuter marriage condition and marital satisfaction are significantly affected by other aspects such as number of children, distance difference, and meeting duration. We suggest that subsequent research should consider these aspects as research variables.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research adds new information about marital satisfaction in dual-earner marriage couples in Indonesia, especially among commuter marriage couples. This study also contributed to literature by examining gender and dual-earner status. Despite its contributions, we are aware that this study has some limitations that can help future research. First, as we only retrieved data online, the sampled characteristics, such as socio-economic conditions, education, and employment may be too similar. In a subsequent study, offline data retrieval methods can obtain diverse sample characteristics that are expected to produce rich data.

Second, the study results showed commuter marriage couples are satisfied with their union. Although this is an interesting finding, we realized that we failed to delineate boundaries to commuter marriage spouses based on difference in distance and interval of meeting duration. If

there are definite boundaries in distance difference and meeting duration interval, then the categories of the marriage commuter couples would be clarified in data processing. This data has affected marital satisfaction in commuter marriage couples. Thus, we encourage that a specific sample of commuter marriage couples, with predetermined distance difference and meeting duration interval. Furthermore, the duration in which the couple underwent a commuter marriage and the existence of a child may be considered.

### Conclusion

This study was intended to compare marital satisfaction in dual-earner couples based on residential conditions, namely single-residence and commuter couples. Results showed a significant mean score difference between single-residence and commuter couples, wherein commuter couples tend to show higher marital satisfaction than dual-earner couples who live in single-residence. This study also found significant mean score differences based on gender, wherein employed married men have higher marital satisfaction than employed married women. However, the interaction effect between residence types and gender on the marital satisfaction of dual-earner couples was not significant.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author(s) declared that there are no conflicts of interest with respect to authorship or the publication of this article.

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