# Self-disclosure in Marriage

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Keywords: Marriage, Long-Distance Relationship, Self-Disclosure.

Abstract:

Marriage is an emotional bond between two individuals who share physical and emotional intimacy and sharing responsibility. Everyone wants to have a harmonious marriage, but there will be a problem that usually occurs in their relationships. Communication occurs in couples is very important for the welfare and harmony of marriage. One of the most important forms of communication is self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is the process of making oneself known by others by verbally expressing thoughts, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and past experiences to a partner. This study aimed to determine the differences in self-disclosure in long-distance married couples and couples who live together using quantitative methods with incidental sampling techniques. This study consisted of 100 samples (25 long-distance married couples and 25 married couples living together). The data were collected using the Marital Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (MSDQ) scale which showed the reliability of coefficient value ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.907. The results of the Mann-Whitney test analysis (U = 600) and also showed that the significance value (p) = 0,000 (p < 0.05). Based on these results it can be concluded that there are differences in self-disclosure in long-distance married couples and couples who live together. The self-disclosure in long-distance married couples who live together.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

Human needs love and affection, including the desire to have a partner and the urge to have a family. Giving and receiving affection, warmth, and friendship can be fulfilled through marriage (Mijilputri, 2015). Olson (2003) mentions that marriage, as a legal commitment, is the emotional bond between two individuals who share physical and emotional intimacy, sharing responsibility and income. According to Pal (2017), marriage can be social security for individuals, because individuals can obtain security and attention, so that their existence and welfare are guaranteed. Pal (2017) also added that by marrying, individuals can feel pleasure, happiness, trust, and peace of mind through interactions with other individuals who are involved in a marriage relationship. An ideal marriage is a marriage that is considered to provide intimacy, commitment, friendship, the fulfillment of sexual needs, affection, togetherness, and emotional development (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009).

Being able to have a harmonious marriage is the hope of every married couple and it is an indicator of a successful marriage (Wulan & Chotimah, 2017).

However, most married couples claim that their marriage is not following what is expected (Sari, Rinaldi & Ningsih, 2018). Conflict in marriage is a natural thing to happen, but the inability of couples overcome these conflicts can lead to dissatisfaction in marriage (Papalia, Old & Feldman, 2009). Sometimes conflict in marriage is inevitable and to obtain a healthy marriage relationship, couples tried to accept and resolve conflicts, but in unhealthy marital relationships, conflicts arise due to various reasons, for example, conflict between role performance and expectations of the couple's role to cause the husband's inability and his wife in resolving the problems they face can disrupt a marriage relationship (Pathan, 2015). Furthermore, Pathan (2015) also states that various marital problems can lead to divorces, such as lack of commitment, lack of communication, neglect, emotional abuse, infidelity, inability to manage conflict, financial problems, and sexual discrepancies.

Henry and Miller (2004) also stated that the most common marital conflicts occur due to lack of communication, sexual intimacy, money, sexual problems, and children. Various marital conflicts, especially in young couples, can lead to dissatisfaction and discomfort (distress) in the area of work and family (Schabracq, Winnubst & Cooper, 2003). Furthermore, Pathan (2015) stated that marital conflict is caused by various reasons such as educational disparity, economic problems, workload and differences of opinion, but the suspicion between spouses, dowry, mental and physical harassment committed by in-laws or husbands and infidelity are the main cause of conflict in marriage.

The married couple cannot avoid conflict that arises in their marriage (Rini, 2009) and they will choose to live together under one roof and spend time together with their partners (Rubyasih, 2016). Individuals expect to have a romantic relationship in their marriage, where couples do not want to be separated and always want to be together (Muliadi, 2017). However, many married couples do not live together in everyday life (Nastiti & Wismanto, 2017). Couples decided not to live together or having a long-distance marriage due to various things (Dewi, 2013), including undertaking or work assignments out of town for a long time (Naibaho & Virlia, 2016).

According to Hampton (2004), long-distance marriage is a marriage relationship that separated by a distance that does not allow physical closeness for a certain amount of time. Jimenez (2010) said that long-distance marriages are usually characterized by the absence of a spouse or the absence of physical attachment to the spouse due to the difficulty of the spouse's visit and return home in one day. This longdistance relationship is very difficult to live with a married couple (Suryani & Nurwidawati, 2016). Establishing a long-distance marital relationship is not an easy task, compared to couples who live at home, who have the intensity of time to meet almost every day. Couples who have long-distance marriages certainly have different conflicts with couples who live at home because of the distance, meeting, and limited communication (Handayani, 2016). Besides, being in a long-distance marriage makes couples having not much physical contact with their partner (Bois, Sher, Grotkowski, Aizenman, Slesinger & Cohen, 2016), unable to communicate directly with their partner (Rubbyasih, 2016; Prameswara & Sakti, 2016), have less time to interact directly, compared to couples who live together (Stafford & Merolla, 2007), and the lack of togetherness, making it very difficult to build intimacy in the relationship (Handayani, 2016). This can lead to conflict, due to differences in perception during communication (Prameswara & Sakti, 2016).

With this kind of various difficulties experienced by long-distance couples can cause them to experience a variety of psychological conditions such as stress, feeling lonely, boredom, anxiety, less stable emotions, and the doubtful of the couple (Stafford, 2005). Married couples who have long-distance relationships are more likely to experience stress-related to separation, travel costs, careers, and decision making (Pistole, Roberts, & Chapman, 2010). Merolla (2010) reported that stressors on individuals in long-distance relationships, related to difficulties managing household tasks, fewer opportunities for sexual relations, and potential for increased financial costs.

Jourard (1971) states that to make a harmonious relationship, two partners must be mutually open. At the beginning of the marriage, the couple often felt upset with their partner's behavior that was too quiet and did not talk much. Jourard (1971) states that when couples are not open to each other, it can lead to new conflicts in marriage, where the couple complains that their partners do not share enough thoughts. Edwin (in Rubben & Stewart, 2013) explains that communication occurs in couples is very important for the welfare and harmony of marriage. Furthermore, Zaheri, Dolatian, Shariati, Simbar, Ebadi, Batool and Azghadi (2016) also stated that communication is the most important factor for the continuity of a relationship. When individuals do not understand and unable to communicate skillfully, it can become problems in the family that have an impact on marital dissatisfaction. Good communication can be a differentiator between satisfied and unsatisfied couples in their marital relationships (Troy, 2000). Prameswara and Sakti (2016) state that well established communication can maintain the integrity of marriage. Also, the interaction between partners is important for a successful marriage relationship (Stafford, 2005; 2010), while for longdistance marriage, one effective face-to-face communication and physical intimacy, namely through intimate talks, can reduce conflict (Stafford, 2010).

One of the most important forms of communication is self-disclosure (DeVito, 2011). Romdhon and Wahyuningsih (2013) also stated that self-disclosure as one of the important communication skills for individuals when dealing and interacting with others, where individuals can express various complaints or objections to something that is considered to interfere in a marriage. Individuals can also express their feelings to their partner about a situation, express their

thoughts or opinions about a topic, get certainty about feeling or get suggestions and advice from their partner (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). When couples are not able to self-disclosure then they are unable to adapt, lack of self-confidence, feelings of fear, anxiety, and inferior, which can affect their mental health (Johnson, 1981).

According to Nugroho (2013), self-disclosure can build intimacy in a relationship to overcome conflict, where both partners try to make disclosures so that couples trust and open up to each other. Selfdisclosure is the ability of individuals to disclose information about themselves to others to achieve a close relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Selfdisclosure has an important role in developing intimacy between partners (Masaviru, Mwangi & Masindano, 2015; Masaviru, 2016). Self-disclosure can also help individuals in releasing pent-up feelings and tensions within themselves as well as being a means to tell the individual's deepest desires related to the personal idea or sharing about expectations related to spouses or household problems (Romdhon & Wahyuningsih, 2013). With intimacy, couples can share a lot of information and tend to make joint decisions on various topics, including contraception to use, because this kind of communication is important to build satisfying between couples. sexual relations Good communication is an important component of marital satisfaction (Tang, Bensman & Hatfield,

The higher self-disclosure of the individual to his partner, the fewer problems that occur in marital relationships (Hendrick, 1981). In successful and long-lasting marriages, interpersonal communication tends to grow in a deep, sensitive and open manner (Bograd & Spilka, 1996). Johnson (1981) argues that individuals who conduct self-disclosure appropriately can adapt more. They tend more confident, more competent, reliable, more capable of being positive, trusting others, more objective, and open to their partners.

### 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of self-disclosure was first introduced by Jourard (1964) to the individuals who have close relationships such as mothers, fathers, friends, and spouses. Jourard (1971), defines self-disclosure as an individual act when showing and displaying oneself, which requires courage to be known and understood so that others can judge, love, listen and trust in giving personal information to others which includes: attitudes or opinions, tastes, and interests, work or education, physical, financial and personality.

According to Waring, Holden, and Wesley (1998), self-disclosure is the process of making oneself known by others by verbally expressing thoughts, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and past experiences to a partner. Although self-disclosure has been discussed by Jourard, the first person who looked at self-disclosure in general, individuals who have close relationships such as mothers, fathers, male friends, female friends and spouses rather than specifically in marital relations. Waring, Holden, and Wesley (1998) said there are four dimensions of self-disclosure, including reflect one's thoughts and feelings directly about marital relationships (Relationship), the expression of thoughts and feelings related to sexuality (Sex), reflect direct disclosure of information regarding financial matters (Money), and the disclosures that are not done together, where only one partner is doing selfdisclosure (Imbalance).

According to Jourard (1971), self-disclosure has three characteristics, including:

#### Breadth

Relating to the material disclosed on the topic of conversation, there are six categories of that are usually disclosed. There are attitudes and opinions, feelings and interests, work or college, money, personality, and body. Mulcahey's research (in Jourard 1971) found that regarding differences topics in men and women, it shows topics that are often discussed by women are tastes, hobbies, and personality. Man expressing tastes, hobbies, lessons, attitudes, and opinions

#### Depth

Relating to the depth of self-disclosure or how open the individual is in expressing himself to others. There are four levels: never tells another person about aspects in the individuals, speaking in general, telling in a full and very detailed story, lying or giving a false picture of the individuals to others.

### • Target

Relating to who is targeted by someone in conducting self-disclosure, there are five targets that usually the object of self-disclosure, namely: father, mother, male friend, female friend, and partner. Usually in childhood to early adolescence teenagers more often reveal themselves to their parents, but adults often do self-disclosure to peers or the opposite sex.

#### 3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research design used a quantitative research approach with comparative study. The population in this study are married couples who have long-distance marriages and couples who live together and located in Banda Aceh. The sampling technique in this study used non-probability sampling with incidental techniques. This technique used when the researcher accidentally meets the sample and is suitable as a source of data..

### 3.1 Partisipants

Researchers determined 100 research samples consisting of 50 married couples living together and 50 married couples who have long-distance marriage to fill the scale of the study. The sample also had to match the characteristic, which is one of the couples is out of town or abroad, the distance was over 150 km, unable to commute within one day and over one year of marriage.

#### 3.2 Measurement

The instrument was used to measure self-disclosure in this study was an adaptation of the Marital Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (MSDQ) by Waring, Holden, and Wesley (1998). The MSDQ is used to measure couples' self-disclosure in marriage. The MSDQ consists of 40 true and false items with four dimensions to be measured, namely relationship, sex, money, and imbalance (Waring, Holden & Wesley, 1998). The type of scale that was used in this study was the Guttman scale which consists of a group of positive and negative statements with the choice of answers. On this scale, the acquisition of a higher score indicates that a higher level of selfdisclosure of an individual, and a lower the score obtained the lower the level of individual selfdisclosure. Waring, Holden, and Wesley (1998) tested the validity of the MSDQ using construct validity. The range consistency value of the MSDQ is from 0.68 to 0.91, with an average consistency of 0.33. Waring (2001) found the reliability of the MSDQ is  $(\alpha) = 0.6423$ The data analysis technique used to test the hypothesis was the Mann-Whitney Test and run with SPSS Version 22.00 for windows.

#### 4 RESULT

## 4.1 Hypothesis Test

The Mann-Whitney test technique is used to analyse the differences between self-disclosure in long-distance marriage couples and those who live together, because the data were abnormally distributed and homogenous. The hypothesis in this research is there is a difference of self-disclosure in long-distance marriage and couples who live together. The results of the analysis shown in table 1

Table 1: Mann-Whitney Test Analysis of Long-Distance Marriage Couples and Couples Who Live Together.

Self-Disclosure	N	Mean	Sig
Long-distance marriage	50	37,51	0,000
couples			
Couples who live	50	63,49	
together			

Based on table 1, it can be seen that the significance value of the study (p) = 0,000, which value is smaller than the standard significance level p < 0.05. This result shows that the research hypothesis is accepted. So it can be concluded that there are differences in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage couples and couples living together.

The researcher also made categorized from the self-disclosure score on the long-distance marriages couples and the couples living together. The results of the categorization can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: Categorized of Long-Distance Marriage Couples and Couples Who Live Together.

Categorized	Long-Distance	Marriage Couples
	Marriage	Who Live Together
	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%)
High	80	88
Not	10	8
Categorized		
Low	10	4
Total	100	100

Based on table 2, it is known that there are 80% of long-distance marriages couples are in high self-disclosure category, 10% included in the low self-disclosure category and the other 10% are not categorized. Meanwhile, in couples who live together, 88% included high self-disclosure category, 4% included in low self-disclosure

category and 8% are not categorized. In this study, the majority of subjects both long-distance couples and couples who live together have high self-disclosure.

#### 5 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine whether there are differences in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage and married couples who live together. Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney test, the statistical hypothesis obtained shows the significance value (p) = 0,000 (p = <0.05). Based on the results of the study showed that there is a difference in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage couples and married couples who live together. The self-disclosure in long-distance married couples is less than the couples who live together.

The findings of this study support some of the previous studies, including research conducted by Suryani and Nurwidawati (2016). They found that when having long-distance marital relationships, there is a need for proper communication and openness with a partner so that obstacles and problems such as limited communication, sense suspicious, jealousy because couples are not faithful in long-distance relationships, can be resolved properly. Suryani and Nurwidawati (2016) also added that couples who have long-distance relationships, lack of physical presence of partners, makes couples rarely have verbal communication, compared to married couples who live together. So self-disclosure is one of the most important components for increasing intimacy in a relationship given the very limited communication.

Suminar and Kaddi (2018) added that in long-distance marital relationships, married couples must have the commitment, openness, honesty, mutual understanding, and mutual trust. Furthermore, Suminar and Kaddi (2018) also explained that in a long-distance marriage, quality communication was needed, where both partners had to express their feelings to each other, ask questions about their partner, support and pray for mutual success.

Rini (2009) also stated that long-distance married couples have to talk to each other about many things without being asked during communication, this is important to do because there is not as much time together as couples who live together. When the two partners are not open with each other, it can make it difficult for the couple to share information in a limited time (Scott, 2002). Smith's statement (in

Rini, 2009) said that the lack of communication can cause an imbalance with a partner, where a balanced pair can be shown by being open to each other. As research conducted by Laurenceau and Barrett (2005) found that disclosures made together can make couples closer to each other, the response given by any of the related pairs submitted will make couples more willing to be open to each other.

The results of this study also indicate that there are 80% of long-distance marital relationships have high self-disclosure, while married couples who live together there are 88% have high self-disclosure. Hendrick (1981) found that the higher self-disclosure the fewer marital problems caused. Furthermore, Johnson (1981) states that individuals who can express themselves appropriately, are proven able to adjust, more confident, competent, reliable, more able to be positive, trust in others, objective and more open in a relationship.

In this study, there were 10% of long-distance marriage couples who had low self-disclosure, while married couples who lived together were 4% who had low self-disclosure. Therefore, self-disclosure is very important in developing intimate relationships, in this case, Jourard (1971) states that when self-disclosure is not carried out together, where only one partner is more self-disclosure, this can lead to conflicts in marital relationships and can make couples reluctant to open themselves. Based on the results of this study, there are differences in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage couples and couples who live together that are not much different.

Another factor that can influence self-disclosure is age, where the entire sample of this study belongs to an early adult age group that is 24-30 years as much as 56% and 31-40 years as much as 44%. Accordingly, Jourard (1971) found that selfdisclosure to couples increases after marriage and then begins to decrease after the couple reaches the age of 40 years and above. Furthermore, Jourard (1971) also states that as individual aging, communication in intimate relationships decreases. Besides, Jourard (1971) also added that selfdisclosure is not important for couples when they have been married for quite a long time, where couples have known each other and are satisfied in the relationship. In this study the number of subjects which are married in 1-5 years was 58%, 5-10 years was 24% and over> 10 years was only 18%.

#### 6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine whether there are differences in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage and married couples who live together. The results of the study showed that there is a difference in self-disclosure in long-distance marriage couples and married couples who live together. The results of this study also indicate that there are 80% of long-distance marital relationships have high self-disclosure, while married couples who live together have 88% of high self-disclosure. In this study, there were 10% of long-distance marriage couples who had low self-disclosure, while married couples who lived together were 4% who had low self-disclosure.

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