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A Comparative Study of Marital Satisfaction Between Indonesian and Chinese Wives

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Abstract.

Many studies indicate that marital satisfaction is affected by demographic factors (length of marriage, number of children, the age of husband and wife, income, and culture). The aim of this study is to describe the differences in marital satisfaction based on demographic variables, between Indonesian and Chinese wives. The subjects in this study are 463 wives (268 wives from Indonesia and 195 wives from China), within age range 25 - 45 years old. This study is quantitative research with survey methods using ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS). The aspects of EMS Scale are Idealistic Distortion, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation. The data analysis using T-test & Mann U Whitney (non parametric). The results indicate marital satisfaction in Indonesian wives is higher than Chinese wives. In demographic variables, there are significant differences between China and Indonesia in age, number of children, age of children, job status, income, and education aspect. The length of marriage aspect has no difference between Indonesian and Chinese wives.

Keywords: marital satisfaction, demographic factors.

INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction is an expectation for every married couple. Marital satisfaction is a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning. Marital satisfaction can be evaluated from the perspectives of both husbands and wives point of view. Several factors are said to influence wives' marital satisfaction. (Schoen, et al in Zainah, Nasir, Hasim, and Yusof, 2012). One of the interesting things to study about the wife's marital satisfaction is the number of children, and according to Bradbury et al. (2000) the number of children is one of the aspects from demographic variables. In Asia, more and more children are believed to bring good fortune to the family. But the fact is, the woman has extra responsibilities that must be carried, because of traditional values in Asia said that the main task of the mother is taking care of children (Bulatao, 1978). Child care hassles may cause physical and psychological exhaustion for the mother, which could have resulted in the mother can no longer enjoy the meaning of marriage for life.

Marital satisfaction is an overall evaluation of all matters relating to the condition of marriage, like the fulfillment of the needs, expectations and desires in conjugal marriage. Many factors that can affect marital satisfaction, such as: number of children, employment

status of husband and wife, partner age, educational level and duration of marriage age and culture. Bradbury et al. (2000) mentions that there are several factors related to marital satisfaction, among other sociodemographic factors such as age, number of children, socioeconomic status, length of marriage. Prasetya research about the number of children associated with marital satisfaction of wives (2010) in Metro Manila, Philippines showed that there was a significant negative correlation between the number of children with marital satisfaction in women with $r = -0.260$ with $p < 0.05$. Also added by Aldous (1996) that there is a sense of fatigue seemed to make the women can no longer enjoy being with her husband, which in turn lowers satisfaction with the marriage.

Jose O, Alfons V (2007) in Belgium examined the effects of age, education, number of children, employment status, and length of marriage on marital satisfaction. Among the demographic variables, the effect of length of marriage was highly significant with marital satisfaction. In a separate analysis, we found that the effect of age and number of children had a statistically significant effect on the sexual adjustment of the respondents. While research Onyishi, et al (2012) in Nigeria found that a positive relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction among parents. Number of children was the strongest predictor



of marital satisfaction even when compared to other variables like wealth and education. Numerous status characteristics of women have been identified that influence the level of marital satisfaction experienced by wives. Many earlier studies focused on objective determinants of marital satisfaction such as age, marital status, and education (Jejeebhoy, 2000:204). While Zaniah, et.al (2012) said that marital satisfaction can be evaluated from the perspectives of both husbands and wives point of view. Several factors are said to influence wives' marital satisfaction and previous research has shown that several variables demographics are related to marital satisfaction of husbands and wives. Factors that influence or contribute to marital satisfaction may differ across cultures. Based on some of the results of previous studies, the researcher wanted to see marital satisfaction difference between Indonesian and Chinese wives.

METHODS

Participants

The most participants in this study were 25 years old until 30 years old, with length of marriages from 1 – 5 years. Most of Indonesian wives have 2 children and most of China wives have only one child. Most of participants Indonesia and China are working mother which have income between 0 – 24,999 \$ / month. Indonesian wives mostly have higher education level than China wives.

Measurement

Demographic Variable

The Demographic questionnaire was designed by researcher to collect socio-demographic information such as participant's age, race/ethnicity, length of marriage, number of children, age of the children, job status, income, education. Age range in this study was from 25 until over 45 years, race/ethnicity the participant are Indonesian and Chinese. Length of marriage was lived during the time participants were married. Number of children and child's chronological age, wife's employment status (working or not working), and education level of the participants obtained the data identity, income is the total income of the family income for each month. Table below provides detail information about demographic characteristics.

Demographic Variable	Country	
	Indonesia	China
Age	25-30	25-30
Length of Marriage	1-5	1-5
Number of Child	2	1
Age of Child	Childhood	Childhood
Work	Working	Working
Income	0-24,999\$	0-24,999\$
Education	Master degree	Undergraduate

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was assessed with *ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS)*. Marital Satisfaction in the EMS was based on a measure previously developed by Fowers and Olson (1993). The EMS comprises two of the subscales of the ENRICH Inventory. The ENRICH Inventory is a multidimensional marital satisfaction inventory that includes 12 category scales. The aspects of EMS Scale are Idealistic Distortion (e.g., “”), Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation. The EMS Scale is a 15-item scale comprising the Idealistic Distortion (5 items) and Marital Satisfaction scales (10 items) and divide into positive and negative item. The measurement instruments used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was very strongly disagree, and 5 was very strongly agree. The instruments distributed in China was translated into Mandarin Chinese and the instruments distributed in Indonesia was translated into Indonesia language.

Scoring procedure.

The EMS Scale provides a score for each partner. This score is derived by first scoring the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales, then correcting the Marital Satisfaction score downward on the basis of the person's idealistic Distortion score. Individual raw scores for the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales are calculated by summing the appropriate items for each scale and changed into percentile scores. Individual EMS scores are obtained by revising Marital Satisfaction scores to correct for Idealistic Distortion scores with the following formula (Fowers and Olson, 1993).

RESULT

Table 1. Demographic Variable

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	Sig	Frequency			
		INDO		CHINA	
		Variable	%	Variable	%
Age	.044	25 – 30	31.2 %	25 – 30	34.0 %
		41 – 45	25.3 %	31 – 35	26.0 %
Length of marriage	.003	1 – 5	26.0 %	1 – 5	36.5 %
		6 – 10	22.3 %	6 – 10	24.0 %
Number of Children	.000	2	37.2 %	1	74.5 %
		1	34.2 %		
Age of Children	.000	Children	47.6 %	Children	56.5 %
		Adolescent	13.8 %	Adolescent	21.0 %
Job status	.000	Working	69.1 %	Working	80.0 %
Income/month	.066	\$0—\$24,999	43.9 %	\$0—\$24,999	47.0 %
Education	.000	Master Degree	37.2 %	Undergraduated	37.5 %
		Senior high school	30.9 %	Junior & Senior Colledge	22.0 %

Table 2. The Aspect of Marital Satisfaction

Aspect	Mean		SD	Range
	Indonesia	China		
	Idealistic Distortion	20.0632		
Marital Satisfaction	39.9963	36.3050	6.17197	30.00
Personality Issues	3.4201	3.2850	1.20250	4.00
Communication	4.0037	3.4700	1.19232	4.00
Conflict Resolution	4.1078	3.6200	0.95001	4.00
Financial Management	3.6431	3.3150	1.23346	4.00
Leisure Activities	4.2045	3.4900	1.0168	4.00
Sexual Relationship	4.1859	3.9300	1.04864	4.00
Children and Parenting	3.7398	3.3950	1.19979	4.00
Family and Friends	3.9814	3.8400	1.14753	4.00
Equalitarian Roles	4.3383	4.0550	0.97394	4.00
Religious Orientation	4.3717	3.9050	0.99406	4.00

Table 3. Differences Marital Satisfaction between Indonesian And Chinese Wives

VARIABEL	Differences	MEAN (using T test)	
		INDONESIA	CHINA
Marital Satisfaction	0.000	-4.349	53.0498 47.8462

DISCUSSION

There is significant difference in marital satisfaction between Indonesian (mean = 53.0498) and Chinese (mean = 47.8462) wives ($z = -4.349$, asymp. sig. = .000 (<.05) (table 3)

Marital satisfaction in Indonesian wives higher than Chinese wives, except the income/month are not different between Indonesian and Chinese wives (sig. = .066). Especially the number of children and level of education, there are Indonesian higher than Chinese wives (table 1). Orgill (2005) said that this is an era in which women's autonomy is influencing the expectations and desires of couples in a marital relationship and the

same time that efforts to improve the status of women are being encouraged. As women receive more opportunities to expand their skills and increase their position in the public sphere, they will want to feel respected and valued as individuals. They will also have increasing expectations of being equal partners in their marital and parental roles. Number of children in Indonesia more than in China and according to the study of Onyishi, et.al (2012) in Nigeria found that the number of children significantly affect marital satisfaction. There are a positive relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction among parents. Number



of children was the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction even when compared to other variables like wealth and education. Onyishi also said that married and would-be-couples are encouraged to give birth to a small size of children they can manage as that would reduce stress associated with parenting.

Length of marriage is not different between Indonesian and Chinese wives. The previous study found that the longer the duration of marriage, the more satisfied the individual was with his or her marriage. A person who is satisfied with his or her marriage is an indication that he or she is also in a good relationship with his or her spouse and a good relationship is an indication of a supportive relationship (Rohany and Sakdiah in Zainah, 2010). In this study some aspect of marital satisfaction on Indonesian wives has score all

of the aspect higher than Chinese wives (table 2) describe that communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, equalitarian roles and religious orientation as an aspect of marital satisfaction is higher on Indonesian wives. Communication is important because it affects both marital quality and dual-career lifestyle satisfaction ((Perrone and Worthington, 2001 in Zainah, 2010). If the communication style of the couples is dyadic, they will be able to solve their problem well. And that can be done if the spouse had an equalitarian roles. Couples like this also can use time together on their leisure time, they will also share in anything like income or financial management, decision making, religious orientation and parental roles (Carr, 2000).

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