

## Love and Distance: Unveiling the Influence of Self-Disclosure, Gratitude, and Marital Satisfaction Among Military Wives

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### Abstract:

*This study examines the influence of self-disclosure and gratitude on marital satisfaction among military wives in long-distance marriages (LDM). Long-distance relationships present challenges in communication and emotional intimacy, making marital satisfaction highly dependent on open communication and the ability to appreciate one's partner. This study aims to determine the extent to which self-disclosure and gratitude contribute to marital satisfaction among military wives in Surabaya. This research employs a quantitative correlational approach, involving 350 military wives in long-distance marriages. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire, including the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS) for marital satisfaction, the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS) for self-disclosure, and the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) for gratitude. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of each variable on marital satisfaction. The findings indicate that self-disclosure has a positive impact on marital satisfaction. Wives who openly share their thoughts and feelings with their spouses tend to experience greater harmony in their relationships. Gratitude also plays a significant role, as individuals who appreciate their partners are more likely to feel happiness and fulfillment in their marriage. Together, these two variables make a substantial contribution to marital satisfaction among military wives in long-distance marriages. In conclusion, this study highlights that open communication and gratitude are essential factors in maintaining harmony and happiness in long-distance marriages. Therefore, couples in LDM are encouraged to improve open communication and cultivate gratitude to navigate the challenges of their relationship successfully.*

**Keywords:** *gratitude, long-distance marriage, military wives, marital satisfaction, self-disclosure*

## 1. Introduction

Marriage is an integral part of human life, encompassing emotional, psychological, social, and cultural aspects. Couples face various challenges throughout their marital journey, one of which is achieving harmony and satisfaction in marriage. Marital satisfaction is an important indicator of relationship happiness and fulfillment. According to Fowers & Olson (1993), marital satisfaction is the emotional perception of a couple regarding their marriage, involving feelings of happiness and contentment. Good communication, mutual trust, and the ability to support and understand each other are key factors in achieving satisfaction (Herawati & Widiantoro, 2019). Additionally, Afiatin (2018) highlights that a couple's ability to resolve conflicts healthily and constructively plays a major role in ensuring marital satisfaction.

However, dissatisfaction in marriage can arise due to various internal and external factors, often leading to household conflicts and threatening relationship harmony. Unresolved dissatisfaction may lead to emotional distress and declining relationship quality (Arvia & Setiawan, 2020). Fowers & Olson (1993) identified ten dimensions influencing marital satisfaction, including communication, shared recreational activities, religious orientation, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual relations, relationships with family and friends, and equality between spouses.

Among these challenges, one significant phenomenon is how couples in long-distance marriages (LDM) maintain marital satisfaction. LDM is a form of marriage in which spouses live apart for extended periods, often due to professional responsibilities. This phenomenon has become increasingly relevant with the rising number of couples who either choose or are required to maintain long-distance relationships. A prime example is military wives, who often experience extended separation due to their spouses' deployment (Safitri et al., 2020). The physical distance, communication limitations, and emotional strain can lead to feelings of loneliness and moral burden on the wife, potentially triggering complex conflicts and affecting marital satisfaction.

## 2. Methodology

This study aims to examine the influence of self-disclosure and gratitude on marital satisfaction among military wives in LDM. Conducted in Surabaya, this research involves military wives who meet the criteria of being in an LDM. Since the population is indeterminate, the sample size was calculated using Isaac and Michael's formula for an infinite population, resulting in a minimum of 249 respondents. This study employs a quantitative method with a non-probability sampling technique, specifically incidental sampling. The study consists of three variables: two independent variables ( $X_1$  = self-disclosure and  $X_2$  = gratitude) and one dependent variable ( $Y$  = marital satisfaction).

Data were collected through a questionnaire using a Likert scale to measure all three variables. Marital satisfaction was assessed using the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS) modified by Rachmawati (2017), with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.864. Self-disclosure was measured using the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS) adapted by Fitri (2017), with a reliability score of 0.85. Gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6), adapted for Indonesian respondents by Grimaldi and Hrianuto (2020), with a reliability score of 0.789.

Data analysis was conducted using multiple regression to determine the effect of self-disclosure (X1) and gratitude (X2) on marital satisfaction (Y). Prior to regression analysis, validity and reliability tests were performed to ensure data quality. Classical assumption tests, including normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity tests, were conducted to confirm the suitability of the regression method.

### 3. Results

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the impact of each variable on marital satisfaction. The results showed that self-disclosure and gratitude significantly influenced marital satisfaction, with a p-value < 0.05.

**Table 1.**

*T-Test Results (Partial Influence)*

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	7,802	3,094	-	2,522	0,012
Self Disclosure	0,534	0,047	0,434	11,275	0,000
Gratitude	1,041	0,080	0,501	13,015	0,000

The results indicate that self-disclosure and gratitude each have a significant influence on marital satisfaction, with a significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2.**

*F-Test Results (Simultaneous Influence)*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22015,054	2	11007,527	520,221	0,000
Residual	7342,286	347	21,159	-	-
Total	29357,340	349	-	-	-

The calculated F-value is 520.221 with a significance of 0.000, indicating that self-disclosure and gratitude collectively influence marital satisfaction.

**Table 3.**

*Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>) Results*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0,866	0,750	0,748	4,600

The R Square value of 0.750 means that 75% of marital satisfaction is influenced by self-disclosure and gratitude, while the remaining 25% is affected by other factors not examined in this study.

### 4. Discussion

This study reveals that self-disclosure and gratitude have a significant impact on marital satisfaction among military wives in long-distance marriages (LDM). Open communication and an attitude of gratitude serve as key factors in maintaining marital harmony despite physical separation. The uniqueness of this study lies in its simultaneous

approach to both variables within the context of military wives, distinguishing it from previous research that typically examined only one factor. Furthermore, the large sample size (350 respondents) provides stronger analytical accuracy compared to previous studies, which often relied on qualitative methods or smaller sample sizes.

The findings indicate that self-disclosure plays a crucial role in enhancing marital satisfaction. Wives who openly share their emotions and experiences with their husbands tend to have more harmonious and fulfilling relationships. This aligns with Quek & Fitzpatrick (2013), who found that open communication positively correlates with marital satisfaction, as well as Tang (2013), who identified a link between self-disclosure and emotional and sexual satisfaction in relationships. Meanwhile, gratitude has also been proven to have a significant effect on marital satisfaction. According to Vibra & Primanita (2022), individuals with a grateful attitude are better equipped to handle relationship challenges and maintain household harmony.

The implications of this study are broad. For LDM couples, improving open communication can help maintain emotional closeness, while being grateful for the relationship can reduce stress and strengthen marital satisfaction. For marriage counseling, these findings suggest that intervention programs for LDM couples should emphasize the importance of open communication and gratitude to preserve marital harmony. Additionally, future research can expand the study by exploring other variables, such as coping strategies, social support, or partner trust, and by utilizing a longitudinal approach to examine how these two variables evolve over time.

Overall, this study confirms that self-disclosure and gratitude are essential factors in building marital satisfaction among military wives in long-distance marriages. Open communication fosters understanding and emotional intimacy, while gratitude helps couples view their relationship more positively. These findings provide new insights into marital psychology and can be applied to various intervention programs to support long-distance couples, ensuring they remain harmonious and happy.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the influence of self-disclosure and gratitude on marital satisfaction among military wives in LDM. The results indicate that both self-disclosure and gratitude significantly impact marital satisfaction, both individually and collectively. Open communication fosters understanding and emotional closeness, while gratitude enhances positive relationship perceptions. By improving self-disclosure and cultivating gratitude, military wives can maintain harmony and satisfaction despite the challenges of a long-distance marriage. These findings provide valuable insights for relationship counseling and intervention programs focused on supporting couples in LDM.

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