

A Perspective of Husband and Wife Roles in Long-Distance Marriage

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Abstract: *Marriage aims not only to obtain social acceptance but also to have a long-lasting companionship. Long-distance marriage is a relationship between husband and wife that is both legally and religiously bound. In this research, three samples are used: one sample is an employee, one sample is a lecturer, and one other sample is a university student. In more detail, the samples are: N (26) with a husband working in Cikarang, P (28) is an employee whose husband working in Makassar, and R (35) is a university student whose husband working in Kendari. The research aims to identify the role of husbands in long-distance marriage life and the wives' expectations in living with this marriage. The research methodology used in this research is interview involving instructions and open questions. The result of this research shows that the three samples experienced problems in communicating, so they often had an argument, suffered from loneliness, and lacked the husband's participation in parenting.*

Keywords: *long-distance marriage, couple communication, family, husband's role*

Introduction

A relationship between man and woman in a marriage is the highest form of relationship, involving physical, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects (Khurana, 2017). Some individuals make marriage the standard of someone's prosperity with an attachment between man and woman (Dolbik-Vorobei, 2011). A happy marriage will affect an individual's psychological and physical health (Zimmermann et al., 2019). A husband should treat his wife as a wife and vice versa. Both are also able to make mutual agreements on matters that can be done together when one of them does not carry out their roles properly.

Some married couples have to live separately because their partners work in another city or far from home, or even rarely come home and leave home very often (Y. S. Lee, 2018). This situation makes all activities usually carried out and assigned together with the partners shall be completed by either of them. The wife should be able to share responsibilities with her husband, especially those related to household and health issues, while at the same time respect her husband's decisions (Flax et al., 2017). Nonetheless, in a long-distance marriage, the wives are unable to do it since they have to make their own decision when they are at home.

Also, having lived separately makes a few changes in communication, even may lead to failure in a relationship (Crangle & Hart, 2017; Lavner et al., 2016). Conflict is a common problem that often happens in a marriage (Lucas-Thompson et al., 2017; Neal et al., 2016).

Living separately from partners and interpersonal issues often become supporting factors of a marriage

breakdown (Gravningen et al., 2017). In fact, many people decide to work far from their homes in order to get a decent life (Inoue et al., 2018).

The decision to work far from home is usually made because of several reasons, but it is necessary to get support from the partner (Stoilkovska et al., 2018). When a couple works or lives in a different city, then they will feel different from other couples who live together. Even in a particular situation, decision-making is necessarily required considering it is an essential part of a marriage that becomes husband's or wife's responsibilities (Hung, 2019). With husbands not being able to play the roles optimally and many obstacles that might come, a long-distance relationship can be complicated for many couples. This current study aims to identify how the couples of long-distance marriage live their lives, how they interpret their life, and what problems that occur in their marriage.

Method

Data were collected through interviews using an interview guide and open questions so the samples can answer the questions as freely as possible without the intervention or direction from the researcher. The samples' unique experience is a part of determining the research criteria. The samples were selected using purposive sampling as a suitable sampling type for this research. The characteristics of the samples include married couples who had been in a long-distance marriage relationship for at least 1 year and were willing to become the sample of this research. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique is the direct focus of attention analysis intended to comprehend how individuals understand their life experiences. IPA

technique consists of several stages: repeated transcript, initial noting, emergent themes, developing superordinate themes, moving on to the next sample transcript, finding out patterns between samples, and describing the superordinate themes (Smith, 2007).

Results

Samples of this research are three people who have a long-distance marriage for at least a year with a different background. Three samples are N (26) with a husband working in Cikarang; P (28), an employee whose husband working in Makasar; and R (35), a university student whose husband working in Kendari.

It was found that during LDM, they had been in similar situations but had different characteristics that make this research slightly different from others. What happened in LDM would affect the husband's nurturing role in LDM life, then it was essential to maintain trust and manage the communication patterns established between the couple.

Table 1. Super-ordinate Theme and Subordinate Theme

1	The description of LDM life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Husband's role in household duty 2. Dealing with boredom and tiredness 3. Wife's loneliness
2	The issue in LDM life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disputes in communication 2. Perceived burden 3. Husband's role in nurturing
3	Life meaning in LDM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hopes on marriage 2. Fundamental belief on LDM

According to N and P, one of the husband's role is becoming a good friend who is willing to listen to the wives when they have issues at work. Meanwhile, for R, the husband's role was missing when she had to carry out a heavy task such as nailing a wall herself. When they had to deal with boredom and tiredness, N and P chose to tell their husbands about their feelings and thoughts. Nonetheless, it was slightly different from R, who said she was more relieved when she communicated face to face with her husband for communication was not enough to replace the husband's role as a protector. To three of them, the feeling of loneliness was inevitable. For R, she needed her husband to share everything with and made physical contact that made her feel relaxed. In this case, she tried to deal with it by improving her relationship, such as praying to God.

On the other hand, P often felt depressed with the LDM. She wanted to be physically with her husband and missed his presence by her side. She tried to face the loneliness by spending more time working and gathering with friends. Unlike P, N chose to distract her feeling by taking care of her child.

Living separately makes the couple have a lack of communication. N admitted that she tended to have an argument with her husband more often when communicating by text. Sometimes, they did not talk to each other. It also happened to R, who said that communicating by phone or video call did not help her solve problems. She believed that the conflict would be solved more easily when her husband lived with her since physical touch helped improve their relationship.

The problematic situation of N, P, and R made them hope to be helped by their husbands. N said that the husband's role of nurturing was replaced by her father. Meanwhile, R said that when her husband was far from home, she took care of the kids by herself. On the other side, P said that the husband's nurturing role was replaced by her mother. All three samples said they hoped to be able to spend time together with their husbands.

Discussion

Long-Distance Marriage Life

The husband is a family guard who maintains the pride of his wife (Barker et al., 2017). However, for LDM's husbands, there is a different rule in playing their role since their task is often handled by the wife. They are required to be able to solve household problems independently. However, husbands in LDM usually do not play their roles very well, which can cause conflict in the marriage (M. R. Lee et al., 2015). Sometimes, the husband's body cannot be present in the lives of the wives, but the husbands still play a role in giving their opinions.

There is no physical presence that makes it easy for wives to feel lonely. The feeling of loneliness can only be ignored by having interaction and communication with a partner (Kömürçü et al., 2015). In-depth communication with physical touch is expected to reduce the feelings of loneliness. Previous studies found that loneliness affects health, which also influences the level of burnout and fatigue in a person (Hasan & Clark, 2017). The wives complain when the husband is far from them and feels comfortable when accompanied. In this case, the wives have high expectations for their husbands to deal with their stress, which makes situations more difficult for them. It is because they can only convey their feelings of being bored living life alone through the telephone.

LDM requires a good pattern and quality of communication to reduce loneliness (Favotto et al., 2019). LDM couples can only communicate via video calls or sending short messages (Hampton et al., 2017). The wives have difficulty in dividing their roles as a mother and a wife, especially a carrier woman. On the one hand, the absence of a husband would require the wives to ask their father, mother, or caregiver to assist them in taking care of the children. On the other hand,

marital relations established with this distance will increasingly give them the strength to carry out the separation, where the couples must also be able to overcome difficult times together by strengthening mutual trust (Kim et al., 2018).

Problems in Long-Distance Marriage

The result found that wives went through hard times, especially in maintaining communication. They hoped that they could live together with their husbands and children. Although LDM couples communicate with their spouse, the situation is not always easy for them. In their busy time, either of them might ignore the calls from their spouse, and this often raised suspicion. As a result of inappropriate communication, conflict might arise. Poor management of life adjustments makes less effective communication, which often leads to conflict (Kaczynski et al., 2006)

The Meaning of Long Distance Marriage

Everyone involved in LDM has different reasons. Considering the couples are both workers, the final decision is to do this LDM. The working husband is not only a source of income but also has a protective role in the family (Ansell et al., 2018). However, nobody wants to live apart from their spouse, including couples in this study, who hoped to live together because a lack of communication could hinder their relationship. They tried not to be suspicious of their partners because it would make the relationship more complicated. The wives said they strived to improve their communication patterns because that is the key to a good marriage (Pearson et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the samples want to work together with their husband in parenting because it is not easy for them when doing it by themselves. However, it cannot be fulfilled in LDM couples. The communication using WA sometimes creates a misperception in communication and leads to conflict, which is often difficult to resolve. They even have an argument due to the dissatisfaction of talking via phone, while at the same time, physical touch is expected.

This research is expected to be able to help readers to find out what kind of problems that might arise from LDM and find the patterns of relationship in LDM. The limitation of the research is the lack of diversity of assumptions from the samples due to the limited number of samples used in this study. It is expected that in the future, the diversity of samples can enrich the assumptions so that more in-depth discussion can be presented.

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