

## THE GRATITUDE AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN THE INFERTILE SPOUSES

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### ABSTRACT

Marital satisfaction is one of the most important factors for achieving a happy family. This study aimed to examine the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction in infertile spouses. This study involves 44 samples of spouses who have been married for at least one year and have not had children in Kediri, East Java. The research was conducted by using convenience sampling technique. The data collection techniques used in this study were questionnaires in the form of scales. There were two types of scales used in the data collection process: the scale of marital satisfaction and the scale of gratitude. The data were analyzed by using correlation technique. Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that gratitude had a positive correlation with marital satisfaction with  $r = 0,489$ ;  $p = 0,001$  meaning that the higher the gratitude of an infertile couple, the higher their marital satisfaction is.

**Keywords:** Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, Infertility

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### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is certainly associated with commitment (Latifa, Salsabila and Yulianto, 2021), by the emotional bond between two people to affect the happiness of life and share their physical and emotional intimacy. Most people are more mature than anything else to share responsibilities and income sources, such as work, friendship, and hobbies.

Marriage is often referred to as the unity of two individuals who have different personalities to achieve the set goal together. Koçyigit (2017) illustrated that marriage is the unity of two individuals possessing different interests who love, motivate, and serve each other which is implemented by living and enjoying life together.

Being in a peaceful and lovely family is the goal of a marriage. To reach that goal, it requires a similarity between husband and wife. Thus it is certainly a difficult thing to achieve. They get married on the basis of differences so that the negotiation of equality and adjustment between the two parties is needed. Grover and Helliwell (2019) argued

that marriages aim to gain everlasting happiness both physically and psychologically, so ideal marriages are everlasting marriages, which can only end with the death of one of the spouses.

Marital satisfaction is one of the most important factors for achieving a happy family. Ada and Valentina (2020) said that marital satisfaction is a person's feelings toward their partners regarding their marriage relationship. This is related to the feeling of happiness that the spouse feels from their relationship.

According to Law Number I 1974, marriage is a physical and psychological bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family based on the first principle of Pancasila, Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa (believe in one Almighty God). Marital satisfaction can refer to how spouse evaluates their marriage relationship, whether good, bad, or satisfying and experts agree that it subjectively assesses quality of relationship (Zahari, et al., 2016).

King (2016) stated that marital satisfaction is defined as the attitude an

individual has toward his or her marital relationship. Marital satisfaction is an important subject for researchers and married couples. Additionally, how couples choose to manage conflict in their relationship is associated with individuals' perceptions of satisfaction within the relationship. One part of research suggests that frequent conflict in relationships corresponds with lower relational satisfaction. Sayehmiri, Kareem, Abdi, Dalvand, and Gheshlagh (2020) stated that marital satisfaction that results from sexual and emotional satisfaction is a measure of couples' relationship quality, showing their subjective evaluation of the quality of their relationship.

Marital satisfaction is an important topic which has been widely researched over the past 20 years because of its relationship with divorce, especially. Marital satisfaction is far more informative than divorce statistics because it can provide detail information about the causes of divorce, deteriorating marriages and factors which contribute to a happy marriage.

Marital satisfaction is a major contributor to feelings of comfort about one's life (Hawkins and Booth, 2005; Perrone-McGovern, Boo, and Vannatter, 2012). Although marital satisfaction is something very important but strong finding suggests that marital satisfaction tends to decrease toward the increasing age of marriage (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Chen, and Campbell, 2005). Thus, marital satisfaction is an important factor for establishing a family relationship (Ostovar, et al, 2020).

Marital satisfaction is a mental state that is not achieved automatically, but requires the couple's on going efforts to realize it, especially in the early years of marriage, because in this stage, marital satisfaction is unstable and marital relationship is at risk (Sayehmiri, et al, 2020). Marital satisfaction is influenced by factors such as open communication, open expression of feelings, mutual trust, no partner dominance, satisfying sexual relations, social life, house, adequate income, and relationship with parents' in-laws, in-laws and child and factor from religiosity (Savitri and Hidayati, 2019).

The presence of offspring is one of the factors of marital satisfaction. Having a baby in a marriage can make everything more beautiful. Millions of reasons for happiness will be shown by every spouse who has children. Definitely, all desired expectation of all spouses is having positive hopes. A child becomes very important because he is a gift and mandate from God that we must take care of, care for and raise well (Kristanti and Soetjningsih, 2017).

In Indonesian culture, children's values still have such important meanings (Nurmala, 2021). Children are entrusted by God and are the happiness of living at home. Children are the most beautiful gift for spouses who will continue the family's struggle and honor. Moreover, children with good upbringing will be a shining light for the family.

Mulder (1999) and Estherline and Widayanti (2016) also argued that continuing family lineage is an obligation for husband and wife. The presence of children can not be separated from the figure of a woman because physically, only women are able to be pregnant and give birth to a child through fertilization in the womb. Lateness in having a child is considered as a main failure, because the child is a symbol of fertility and success. Having no child in marriage for a long time will be a problem because there is a belief that this situation will threaten the integrity of the marriage. This problem is often called infertility, not only involving physical health but also having psychological and social impact on the spouses who experience it.

In line with the Family Planning (KB) program which has become a world program by having wider use of contraception, statistical data shows a decrease in birth rates in the city. However, recently many young spouses are having difficulty to have a child even though without taking family planning (KB) program. The increasing number of infertility which has occurred in recent years is caused by many things, in addition to the decrease of the fertility factor (a healthy egg cell production) itself. More and more women postpone to have children for various reasons, such as because of unfixed financial consideration, company regulations to

postpone pregnancy, fear of losing her body shape, and changing attitudes towards maternal functions which consider pregnancy as a burden on career development (Nene, Coyaji and Apte, 2005).

Difficulty in having a child is also called infertility. WHO defines the clinical term of infertility as a problem in reproductive system characterized by failure to get pregnant after 12 months or more of having regular sexual intercourse at least 2-3 times a week without using contraceptives (Hochschild, Adamson, Mouzon, Ishihara and Mansour, 2009).

The term fertility is a capability or reproduction output of a woman or group of women. An indication of a woman's fertility is that she begins to be pregnant until giving birth to a baby, even if she has a miscarriage (bleeding). Besides that, there is also a term of fecundity as a clue to a physiological and biological ability of woman to give birth to a child alive whereas, if in society a woman (mother) cannot give birth to a child, it is said to be infertile (Oktarina, Abadi and Bachsin, 2014).

Infertility can be categorized as a reproductive system disorder which is defined as reproductive failure to get pregnant after months or more of having intercourse without using contraception (Zegers-Hochschild, Adamson, de Mouzon, Ishihara, Mansour, Nygren, Sullivan and van der Poe, 2009).

According to Muryanta (2012) infertility happens when a woman is unable to get pregnant even though sexual activity has been carried out normally for one year. Infertility can occur both to men and women and even at the same time. Infertility is generally diagnosed after a couple have not managed to conceive after a year of trying. Infertility can occur even after having children. There are two types of infertility, primary and secondary infertility. Infertility is said to be primary if previously a husband and wife have never got pregnant. Meanwhile, secondary infertility happens if a spouse fails to get a pregnant after one year postpartum or post-abortion without using any contraception (Prawirohardjo, in Mohammad, Baziad and Prabowo, 2011).

Infertility can be caused by wife or husband. Conditions which cause infertility from wife factor 65%, a husband factor 20%, other and unknown condition 15%. A study showed the cause of infertility associated with problems on the part of the wife is tubal (27.4%), unknown (24.5%), dysmenorrhea problems (20%), uterus (9.1%), ovaries (3.6%) and sexual disorders (2.7%). The number of infertility in women occurs in various ages, 20-29 years (64.5%), 30-39 years (20%), 40-49 years (11.8%), over 50 years (3.7%) (Roupa, Polikandrioti, Sotiropoulo, E. Faros, A. Koulouri, G. Wozniak. And M. Gourni, 2009).

The study results of Hadley and Hanley (2011), conducted on wives who have not had children for three years, found that the majority of research subjects (62% of respondents) had negative assessments toward their marriages and had tendency to be unhappy because of having no children in marriage. Having no child does not only affect the marital satisfaction felt by the wife, but men who are convicted with infertility also exhibit the same reactions, such as loss, depression, exclusion, isolation, and other problematic behavior. Those men also show a feeling of "outsiderness" in family, work and social relationships.

Gratitude can possibly affect the marital satisfaction of the spouse with infertility. The term gratitude in Official Dictionary of Indonesian Language or Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) is defined as: (1) Be grateful to God, and (2) Be lucky (expressing relief, pleasure and so on). In Lughawi, grateful means open and declare, which has meaning to open, express, and mention the pleasure orally, so the essence of gratitude is using all the pleasure from Allah to obey Allah and to avoid all immoral acts (Makhdlori, 2009).

Shihab (1997) explained that the word "gratitude" comes from the language of the Qur'an written in Arabic. The word gratitude is a mashdar form of the verb *syakara-yasykuru-syukran-wa syukranan*. This verb is rooted in the letters *syin, kaf, and ra'*. In language, gratitude also comes from the word "*syakara*" which means praise for the kindness and achievement of something. Gratitude also

means showing something to the surface. In this case, people show Allah's pleasure. Meanwhile, according to the term 'syara', gratitude is an acknowledgment of the pleasure blessed by Allah which is followed by a position to Allah and use this pleasure in accordance with God's guidance and willingness.

Gratitude according to the definition of the language is to acknowledge goodness and be able to have meaning of increasing or developing, while in particular terms, gratitude has the meaning of showing the effect of Allah's pleasure in one's soul by having faith and admiration which is shown orally as well as his worship and obedience which is demonstrated by parts of his body (Munajjid, 2006). Jauziyah (2006) defined gratitude as a part of people's faith, where it lays on two things: doing and leaving. Gratitude has the essence of doing which has the meaning of doing Allah's commands and obeying it. Furthermore, Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz quoted in Jauziyah (2006) explained that gratitude is acknowledging the pleasure obtained to those who give it and expressing his rububiyah.

Additionally, Emmons and McCullough (2003) explained that gratitude comes from the Latin word "gratia" which means prayer, grace or thankful, "the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one's experience", and "an estimate of gain coupled with the judgment that someone else is responsible for that gain". The benefit, gift, or personal gain might be material or nonmaterial (e.g., emotional or spiritual). Gratitude or thankfulness has been highlighted as one of the most influential constructs in positive psychology and is mentioned as one of 24 "strengths of character" in Peterson and Seligman's Manual of Sanities (2004). Gratitude is associated with high welfare, and a sense of purpose, and satisfaction with life (Froh and Bono, 2011; Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan, 2009; McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang, 2002).

Gratitude has been defined as moral goodness, emotions, personality traits, or even attitudes (Emmons and McCullough, 2003). As an emotion, gratitude occurs by following an experience of positive result, such as getting

a gift or appreciating the beauty of nature or the fulfillment of an experience. Gratitude is one's tendency to recognize and react with thankful emotions of other's kindness in positive experiences and for things which he receives from others (McCullough, Tsang, and Emmons, 2002).

Gratitude is a mechanism which influences how one responds to good action and kindness to motivate them to extend similar actions to others, especially to third parties and from benefactors to recipients. This "reciprocal relationship" creates an indirect feeling of gratitude to others that encourages them to do it continuously (Nowak and Roch, 2007; Trivers, 1971).

People who are very thankful have a disposition to feel a higher level of gratitude than those who are not. Frequency refers to how often someone feels grateful. Someone who is very thankful will reveal gratitude several times all day, regardless to the given advantages as long as it refers to the number of things which are thanked by one in a certain time. Those who have a very grateful disposition will report many places and things (for example, schools, work, religious organizations, and health) for which they are grateful.

There are many studies which prove the positive effects of gratitude in adults. Gratitude has been connected to the increasing positive emotions, life satisfaction, and overall feelings of happiness (Rash, Matsuba, and Prkachin, 2011; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts, 2003). Gratitude is also correlated with the decrease of negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and envy, as well as the decrease of physical symptoms (such as hurt) (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Rash et al., 2011). One who shows gratitude believes that they have a "full life". They are able to appreciate pleasure, be simple and appreciate other's help which contributes to full well-being (Watkins et al., 2003).

According to Munajjid quoted in Suminta (2019) explains three aspects in the definition of gratitude, namely; first, get to know the favor. Recognizing the blessings can help create someone who presents these gifts in the heart, makes them special, and believes

in them. If a servant has acknowledged favors, then he will try to know his Lord who has supported him, then ask someone who has received favors from his Lord, then the servant will praise his Lord, and support a servant who has put his trust in his Lord, then a servant will earnestly seek Him and give thanks to Him. Second, receive Favors. Receiving favors is a compilation of servants to welcome the favors obtained by diverting their ignorance to those who have given favors and our desire for Grace from Allah, and Third, praise Allah for the favor that has been given by Him. Praise given for favors given consists of two kinds. First, namely praise the general nature, where a servant praises a benefactor who is generous, kind-hearted, His extensor and others. Second, namely praise that encourages specifically by discussing the blessings that have been bestowed by Him.

Several empirical studies have shown a relationship between gratitude and various psychological aspects such as higher mental health (McCullough, Tsang and Emmons, 2002; Unanue, et al, 2019). Gratitude has also been linked to life satisfaction in general (Kong et al, 2015; Fincham and May, 2020), satisfaction with family, satisfaction at school, optimism, and positive influence among high school students (Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan, 2009). The research conducted by Fan, Emmons, Bono, Huebner and Watkins, (2011) in grades 9 to 12 showed that gratitude is a significant predictor of academic achievement, life satisfaction, social integration, and absorption and lower levels of malice and depression, even after the potential effects of participant's age, gender, ethnicity, and acceptance of special education services were statistically controlled (Froh, Emmons, et al., 2011). Gratitude is also associated with psychological well-being (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts, 2003; Ranna, Tahir, and Ramzan, 2013; Ramxan and Ranna, 2014; Buragohain and Mandal, 2015).

Research on gratitude in Indonesia has also been widely carried out like research by Mukhlis and Koentjoro (2015) which revealed that people with high gratitude experience had greater happiness, hope, and greater pride than

those who were less grateful. In addition, research conducted by Mukhlis and Koentjoro (2015) proved that the influence of grateful training on the anxiety of students who will face the National Examination. Latifah and Helmi's research (2015) aimed to find out the relationship between self-esteem and gratitude with envy for Instagram users. This study found that self-esteem and gratitude had a negative relationship with jealousy on Instagram users, but gratitude had a stronger relationship than self-esteem while the results of Wibisono's research (2017) examined 179 students in Indonesia who are Muslim. The method of data collection was carried out using a questionnaire consisting of three scales, namely the thankfulness scale which was compiled by the researcher himself by referring to the theory put forward by Munajjid and the two scales used to measure subjective well-being namely Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale expressed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen and SWLS (Statification with Life Scale) based on the theory put forward by Diener. The results of this study indicated a significant positive relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being. Rusdi et al (2021) conducted research with the aim to develop Islamic Gratitude Scale (IGS-10) by performing a series of adequate tests. A total of 1,218 respondents from students and workers participated in this study. This study found that the Islamic Gratitude Scale (IGS-10) had good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.863$ ), good content validity and good factorial validity.

McCullough et al. (2002) found that one who expresses gratitude feels themselves more and have higher sociable characteristics. A grateful person or one who practices gratitude shows more positive emotions. This idea is in accordance with Barbara Frederickson's (2001) which highlights the idea that gratitude has the ability to increase one's positive resources and promote defense because positive emotions can prevent from post negative-experience feelings (Froh, et al., 2010). Meanwhile, positive emotions and a greater emotional repertoire not only make one feel better at the moment but also make it more likely for one to feel good in the future (Fredrickson et al., 2003). In accordance with

that, a grateful action helps to build positive resources and can help reverse negative thoughts when they appears. This coping mechanism is important in building a list of positive thoughts allowing one to show defense in the hard times (Watkins, 2004), such as infertility in a spouse.

Gratitude is connected with the increasing satisfaction and encouraging positive behavior in relationships (Algoe, Gable, and Maisel, 2010; Barlette and DeSteno, 2006; Algoe, 2019). The research by Leong (2009) showed that gratitude is a disposition which can predict not only a grateful mood experienced by a person, but also a grateful mood felt by his spouse. The grateful mood has effects on spouses such as marital satisfaction. Moughabghab (2019) revealed that gratitude, trust, grace, and humility are predictors of the spouse's marital satisfaction in Lebanon. Thus, practicing the goodness of trust, grace, and humility seems to have better skills in dealing with family struggles and conflicts, so they will have a more satisfying relationship.

The purpose of this study was to reexamine the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction in spouse experiencing infertility.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Participant

This study involved 44 samples of married couples who have not had children for three years in Kediri, east java. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling in which researchers take the subjects because they want to and are willing to be studied. Thus this was done by researchers because they wanted to get information related to infertility which is quite sensitive and complicated and not all people want it.

### Research Instrument

Marital satisfaction is measured by Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) from Spanier (1978) which is adjusted by using Bahasa Indonesia (Ghufron and Suminta, 2017). DAS consists of four aspects: dyadic satisfaction (DS), dyadic cohesion (Dcoh), dyadic consensus (Dcon), and affectional expression (AE). The instrument has passed several

adaptation stages, namely 1) forward translation, 2) item writing, 3) language testing, 4) field testing, 5) item selection, 6) contract validation and 7) final compilation. Based on the experiment results, 30 items were obtained to have a reliability coefficient 0.910.

Meanwhile, gratitude was measured by using the gratitude measuring instrument developed by Suminta (2019). It has an indicator of knowing pleasure, receiving pleasure and praising Allah for pleasure. Based on the experiment result, it got a reliability coefficient of 0.91.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study was carried out by using the Pearson correlation technique. The data were analyzed by using SPSS.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before testing the hypothesis, the descriptive research data was explained in advance for each variable. A statistical description of the research data was summarized in the following table 1:

Table 1. Description of Research Data

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gratitude	14	25	21,27	2,356
Marital Satisfaction	9	31	23,18	5,266

Based on table 1 above, it was known that gratitude got an empirical average score 21.27 with a standard deviation of 2.356, while marital satisfaction had the empirical average score of 23.18 with a standard deviation of 5.266.

After knowing the description of each variable and then conducting correlation test, there was a relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction. Based on the analysis, it showed that gratitude correlates positively to marital satisfaction,  $r = 0.489$ ;  $p = 0.001$  meaning that the more grateful the spouses are, the higher marital satisfaction they get. The

correlation test results were summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Test Results

		Gratitude	Marital Satisfaction
Gratitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0,489**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,001
	N	44	44
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0,489**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,001	
	N	44	44

The value of Adjusted R Square was 0.239 which showed the contribution of the gratitude variable toward marital satisfaction in couples who experienced infertility 23%. Thus there were still 77% predictors of other variables besides the gratitude variable can be explained. The value of Adjusted R Square were shown in regression test results table 3.

Table 3: Regression Test Results Table 3:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,489 <sup>a</sup>	,239	,221	4,649

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gratitude

b. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

Based on the result, it showed that there was significant relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction. The more gratitude the infertile spouses have, the higher marital satisfaction they get. One purpose of marriage is because of the desire to have children (Manap, et al, 2013). Children are the most beautiful and trustful gifts and entrusts that Allah Almighty gives to parents. Children are highly anticipated by parents as perfecting happiness in the family. Not infrequently couples who have not been blessed with children will make various efforts to get children. Because a house without children will feel lonely and colorless. Having children is one of the factors that can influence the success of a marriage. Having a child in a family, can be a baby and a sign of love from a

married couple, children are considered as hopes, dreams for the future, the successor to the generation and continuation of offspring for parents.

Based on the study result, it proved that religion through gratitude plays an important role in affirming marital continuity and being able to find marital satisfaction. It also reinforced the previous studies which proved the positive effects of gratitude. Gratitude can increase positive emotion, life satisfaction, and overall feeling of happiness (Rash, Matsuba, and Prkachin, 2011; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts, 2003; Unanule et al, 2017; Unanule et al, 2019). Thankfulness also correlates with a decrease of negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and envy, as well as a decrease in physical symptoms (such as feeling hurt) (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Rash et al., 2011). One who shows gratitude believes that they have a "full life". They are able to appreciate pleasure, be simple and appreciate other's help which contributes to full welfare (Watkins et al., 2003).

A grateful action helps to build positive resources and can help reverse negative thoughts when they appear. This coping mechanism is important in building a list of positive thoughts allowing one to show defense in the hard times (Watkins, 2004), such as infertility in a spouse. Gratitude is connected with the increasing satisfaction and encouraging positive behavior in relationships (Algoe, Gable, and Maisel, 2010; Barlette and DeSteno, 2006; Kong et al, 2015; Unanue et al, 2017; 2019; Algoe, 2019; Fincham and May, 2020).

Previous studies found that marital satisfaction is influenced by gratitude in marriage (Herawati and Widianoro, 2019). The grateful mood has effects on spouses such as marital satisfaction. This study result also fits with previous study as has been conducted by Moughabghab (2019) and Feng (2011) that spiritual welfare and gratitude was positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Also in accordance with the results of Ramadhani and Afiatin (2020), it was found that SUPER (Syukur dalam Perkawinan/Gratitude in

Marriage) can increase marital satisfaction in married women.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been done, it can be concluded that there was a very significant relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction in infertility spouses. It showed that gratitude correlates positively to marital satisfaction,  $r = 0.489$ ;  $p = 0.001$ . Thus, it can be stated that the more grateful the spouses are, the higher marital satisfaction they get, especially those who experience infertility.

This study results can be the more specific indication for spouses that the religious component through gratitude becomes very important for their couples considering that religion is one of the variables related to marital satisfaction, especially for infertility spouses. By knowing things which can increase marital satisfaction, it is expected to avoid divorce.

Furthermore, it is expected for further researchers to develop this study result by considering other factors such as infertility of husband or wife, spouse's characteristics, spouse's emotional stability, demographic factors such as family income can be studied more deeply.

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