



Intimacy of married couples: Study on communication through WhatsApp

Siti Rohmah Nurbayati¹, Juni Nanda Prasetyo¹, Edmond Ndayambaje²

¹Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta,
Jl. Colombo No 1, Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

²Community-based protection, PFR-UNHCR, Nyamagabe District, Southern Province, Rwanda
siti_rohmah@uny.ac.id, juni.nanda2015@student.uny.ac.id, edmond.ndayambaje@gmail.com

Article Info

Manuscript Received
April 1st 2022

Revision Accepted
June 21st 2022

Accepted for Publication
August 31st 2022

doi:
[https://doi.org/
10.21831/pri.v5i1.48831](https://doi.org/10.21831/pri.v5i1.48831)

Abstract

This study aimed to find out the relationship between intimacy married couple and their communication via WhatsApp. This quantitative research with correlational method determines the correlation between two variables. The participants in this study amounted to 79 people who has been married for 5 years and using WhatsApp as a medium to communicate with their partner. The data collected using intimacy scale for married couple and a WhatsApp communication scale. Based on the results of the analysis using Product Moment correlation technique and simple linear regression analysis, this study revealed that the correlation coefficient between the intimacy of married couple and WhatsApp communication is .782 with a significance of .000. Communication via WhatsApp application contributed 27.9% toward intimacy married couple. Therefore, it can be concluded that communication via WhatsApp application can affect the intimacy of married couple.

Keywords: *intimacy, communication, WhatsApp*

Suggested citation

Nurbayati, S.R., Prasetyo, J.N., & Ndayambaje, E. (2022). Intimacy of married couples: Study on communication through WhatsApp, 5(1), 1 – 7. <https://doi.org/10.21831/pri.v5i1.48831>

Introduction

Humans are social creatures who need other people in their interactions. Human interactions with other people from different relationships, one of which is the intimate relationship of husband and wife. The intimate relationship of husband and wife is bound by law in the form of marriage. Article 1 of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage provides the definition of marriage as an inner and outer bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family based on God Almighty. Even so, not a few married couples fail to build intimacy with their partners, resulting in divorce. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that in a period of four years, namely in 2012-2015, there were more than 1.6 million divorce cases that occurred in Indonesia. In 2012 there were 346,480 divorce cases in Indonesia. This figure had dropped in 2013 to 324,247, but rose again to 344,237 in 2014. In 2015 the divorce rate continued to increase to 347,256 cases. The Religious Courts Agency (Badilag) of the Supreme Court (MA) also stated that there are five factors that encourage the high divorce rate, namely, disharmony (97,615), lack of responsibility (81,266), economy (74,559), third party interference (25,310), and jealous (9,338).

Disharmony is the biggest factor that drives the high divorce rate according to Badilag. Dewi (2013) said that husband and wife interpersonal communication is positively related to marital harmony. Manna (2021) also said that poor communication in the household can trigger disharmony. Poor communication will also create wider problems, such as: one partner does not feel valued, cannot be shared, and is not there when needed.

Kurniawati (2017) said that communication is one indicator that plays a role in intimacy. Honest and open communication with your partner is a way to maintain the closeness, warmth, and happiness of a husband and wife relationship. Therefore, married couples need to communicate well so that intimacy can be maintained.

Along with the times, the ideal communication between husband and wife is difficult to realize. This is because there are married couples who are in dual career marriages, namely husband and wife both work and share household tasks (Pearson, 1985). The consequence of this is the lack of time that husband and wife have to be together. This leads married couples to find it difficult to balance themselves between work and household matters (Pew Research Center, 2014).

A wife no longer only takes care of the house and takes care of the children, but she also has to work outside the home. A husband no longer only works, but also has to share tasks with his wife to take care of the household and take care of the children. This situation requires married couples to make adjustments in the way they communicate with each other. One alternative solution to overcome this is a gadget.

Gadgets have become a new medium for building communication and increasing the level of emotional intimacy in married couples (Pew Research Center, 2014). In line with a survey from the Pew Research Center, research conducted by Campbell (2015) reveals that technology, including gadgets, can increase or decrease the intimacy of a married couple's relationship. One of the technologies that can be used to communicate with married couples is the WhatsApp application.

The Empathic Marketing Social Media Marketing Report for Indonesia reports that the most popular messaging service in Indonesia is WhatsApp. WhatsApp features help people, especially married couples to stay connected easily despite being separated by distance. The WhatsApp application is also equipped with an end-to-end encryption feature that allows no third party to know the conversations of the two parties.

Research conducted by Anindya (2017) and Hikmah (2018) found that the WhatsApp application can support communication between husband and wife. The features contained in the WhatsApp application service allow married couples who do not have physical proximity to communicate openly and reduce the feeling of reluctance or hesitation when meeting face to face. Unfortunately, the features of the WhatsApp application that allow one to chat privately with other people are often abused by married couples. Rozaq (2018) says that there are many divorces caused by infidelity on social media.

Based on the description above, the formulation of the problem posed is how the intimacy of a married couple in terms of communication through the WhatsApp application. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of communication through the WhatsApp application on the intimacy of married couples. The benefits of this research are expected to enrich the study of intimacy and WhatsApp communication.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational type. This study aims to determine the relationship of one variable to another variable. The study was conducted in four districts in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, namely, Sleman, Bantul, Kulonprogo and Gunung Kidul as well as the City of Yogyakarta.

Participants

The population in this study are men or women who have been married for at least 5 years and still have a partner and use the WhatsApp application to communicate with their partner. The sample in this study amounted to 79 people.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research consists of several stages. The first stage is the deployment of the instrument (intimacy scale and WhatsApp communication scale). The next stage is item selection and reliability. Item selection was carried out using the IBM SPSS for Windows 23 program. Item selection criteria were based on the total item correlation using the .20 limit. This is in accordance with the opinion of Azwar (2018) that the minimum limit of item-total correlation coefficient is .30, but this limit can be considered to be reduced to .20 if the number of items that pass does not meet the desired criteria.

Data obtained directly from research subjects. The data were obtained through 2 research instruments distributed by researchers to 79 subjects. The instruments used are the intimacy scale of married couples and the WhatsApp communication scale. The husband and wife intimacy scale consists of 21 items and the WhatsApp communication scale consists of 24 items. Each subject fills in the items, then the scale is returned to the researcher. The data analysis technique used in this study consisted of Pearson Product Moment correlation.

Result and Discussion

Result

The subjects involved were 79 people consisting of 39 (49.4%) men and 40 (50.6%) women. Based on the descriptive test, the average score of a married couple's intimacy is 24 with a standard deviation of 6.706. The average WhatsApp communication score is 44.24 with a standard deviation of 23.699. The results of the descriptive analysis of the intimacy of married couples show that most of the subjects have a moderate level of intimacy and an occasional level of WhatsApp communication. Categorizations based on the intimacy level and WhatsApp communication are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

The results of the normality test of the data on the variables of intimacy of married couples and WhatsApp communication which were analyzed with the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test were .080 where the results indicated that the data of this study were normally distributed ($\text{sig} > .05$).

Table 1. Intimacy Categorization

Category		N	%
Very High	$x > 34$	4	5%
High	$28 < x \leq 34$	21	27%
Moderate	$21 < x \leq 28$	28	35%
Low	$14 < x \leq 21$	20	25%
Very Low	$x \leq 14$	6	8%
Total		79	100%

Table 2. Communication Through *WhatsApp* Categorization

Category		n	%
Very Often	$x > 80$	9	11%
Often	$56 < x \leq 80$	9	11%
Sometimes	$32 < x \leq 56$	28	35%
Rarely	$9 < x \leq 32$	33	42%
Never	$x \leq 9$	0	0%
Total		79	100%

The results of the linearity test of the data showed that the significance value of the intimacy and WhatsApp communication variable was .000 ($\text{Sig.} < .05$). This can be interpreted that there is a significant linear relationship between the intimacy variable and the WhatsApp communication variable. The results of the Pearson Product Moment analysis test show that the value of the correlation coefficient between the variables of intimacy and WhatsApp communication is .782 with a significance of .000. This shows that the intimacy variable has a significant positive relationship with the WhatsApp communication variable.

The results of the simple linear regression test obtained a significance of .000 ($\alpha < .05$), with the regression equation $Y = 49.119 + 0.691X$. Based on the calculation results, the magnitude of R^2 is .279, which means that 27.9% of the variation in the intimacy of married couples can be explained by the WhatsApp communication variable. The rest (72.1%) is explained by other reasons outside the model. Based on these results, the proposed hypothesis is accepted, namely communication through the WhatsApp application can affect the intimacy of a married couple. The more frequent communication through the WhatsApp application, the higher the intimacy of a married couple. Conversely, the less communication through the WhatsApp application, the

lower the intimacy of a married couple. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Campbell (2015) on technology, communication, and couples' intimacy which states that the use of technology, including WhatsApp, can increase or decrease intimacy.

Discussion

For married couples, especially those who have multiple career marriages, the WhatsApp application plays a very important role in communicating. This is because communication is one of the factors that determine the level of intimacy of a married couple (Rathus, 2006). Communication through the WhatsApp application plays a role in building closeness and warmth in a husband and wife relationship. By looking at the WhatsApp application as an alternative solution to communication problems, married couples can show connectivity to each other even though they are physically apart.

Research conducted by Kurniawati (2017) found that one indicator of long-distance partner intimacy is communication through the media, one of which is WhatsApp. Communication through the WhatsApp application can be a bridge to keep exchanging stories and feel connected to each other. Honest and open communication with your partner is a way to maintain the closeness, warmth, and happiness of a husband and wife relationship.

Communication through the WhatsApp application can also help married couples to be open to each other with problems at home (Anindya, 2017). Sharing the self or opening up is an important ability for married couples to have. Self-disclosure in communicating through the WhatsApp application is able to encourage intimate reciprocal relationships such as expressing love and affection to partners (Pearson, 1983). This can reduce feelings of reluctance or hesitation when meeting face to face (Hikmah, 2018). The more often a husband and wife communicate openly, the higher the intimacy of a married couple.

In addition, discussing daily activities regularly with a partner, whether openly discussing feelings, sex, or beliefs, can make couples understand each other's nature. This can make couples love each other more, can satisfy each other, and trust each other's abilities. Effective communication can create good interpersonal relationships, so that married couples can avoid situations that can damage relationships and cause marriages to become disharmonious (Dewi, 2013).

In addition to sharing the self, the ability to acknowledge the existence of a partner or affirm the other is important to build respect and trust for each other. This is in line with Nurhayati's (2015) research which states that relationship intimacy is influenced by respect. A person can communicate comfortably and openly with his partner when there is mutual acceptance between them. The ability that underlies this is the ability to listen and empathize with your partner. Being able to listen and empathize with your partner implies that he or she is important (Pearson, 1983). This makes the messages clear and makes the couple feel that there is someone who can understand them well. So that it fosters trust and respect for partners that can affect the intimacy of the marital relationship. Therefore, the more often the couple acknowledges the existence of their partner, the higher the intimacy of a married couple.

Another important aspect in the communication of married couples through the WhatsApp application is becoming 'one' and transcending 'one'. Becoming 'one' or being one with a partner aims to form a bond between couples. This bond is the level of closeness between partners accompanied by warmth so that there is no gap between them (Nurhayati, 2015). This can be done by selecting a topic of mutual interest. In addition, discussing things that are important in decision making can also increase closeness to each other (Nurhayati, 2015). The characteristic of becoming 'one' is the use of the word 'we' in communicating in the WhatsApp environment and application. The more often couples express unity in communication, the closer the bond between the partners will be.

On the other hand, couples also need to have the ability to break away from the bonds between partners. This is necessary to avoid the negative effects of dependence on a partner (Pearson, 1983). By paying attention to non-verbal expressions in conversation, partners can give the right response when telling stories. This is an important part of the intimacy aspect which shows that couples complement each other (Nurhayati, 2015). Even married couples who have a high level of intimacy can understand each other when the couple is sulking from the tone of voice used when communicating through the WhatsApp application. Couples are also not bothered in a situation where one of them has to take over the conversation in a WhatsApp group.

Conclusion

This study gives some light regarding the intimacy of married couples by identifying whether it is predicted by ways of communication, specifically mediated by the popular platform WhatsApp. Based on this research, it can be concluded that there is an effect of communication through the WhatsApp application on the intimacy of married couples. The results of this study indicate that communication through the WhatsApp application is a factor that can affect the intimacy of a married couple. Communication through the WhatsApp application provides an effective contribution of 27.9% to the intimacy of a married couple. We encourage future research to further explore the dynamics and the impacts of WhatsApp mediated communication on other marital quality variables such as satisfaction or conflict resolution, giving more comprehensive picture of the communication styles of married couples.

References

- Anindya, Funna. 2017. *Studi Kasus Keterbukaan Diri Pasangan Jarak Jauh Melalui Layanan Aplikasi WhatsApp pada Mahasiswa/i Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta*. Surakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Azwar, S. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Psikologi Edisi III*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2017). *Indeks kebahagiaan 2017* (Nomor Publikasi: 04310.1701. Jakarta: Indonesia.
- Badan Peradilan Agama. (2022). Kasus Perceraian di Indonesia. Retrieved from: infoperkara.badilag.net
- Campbell, Emily C. (2015). *Technology, Communication, and Couples' Intimacy: A Study of Technology Use Behaviour and Intimate Relationships*. Doctor of Philosophy. Greensboro: Faculty of the Graduate School at University of North Carolina.
- Dewi, N.R. & Sudhana, H. (2013). Hubungan Antara Komunikasi Interpersonal Pasutri dengan Keharmonisan Pernikahan. *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 22-31.
- Hikmah, Nurul. 2018. *Keterbukaan Komunikasi dalam Relasi Romantik*. Semarang: Universitas Diponegoro.

- Kemenag. (1974). Undang-undang RI Nomor 1 Tahun 1974, tentang Perkawinan.
- Kurniawati, Rosela V. (2017). *Intimacy pada Pasangan Jarak Jauh*. Salatiga: Universitas Satya Wacana.
- Lenhart, Amanda; Duggan, Maeve; & Smith, Aaron. (2014). *Couples, The Internet, And Social Media. How American Couples Use Digital Technology to Manage Life, Logistics, and Emotional Intimacy Within Their Relationships*. Pew Research Center.
- Mahkamah Agung-Badan Peradilan Agama. (2019). *Direktori Perceraian*. Diakses pada tanggal 20 Mei 2019, dari <https://putusanmabkumahagung.go.id/pengadilan/mahkamah-agung/direktori/perdata/perceraian>.
- Manna, N.S. (2021). Cerai Gugat: Telaah Penyebab Perceraian pada Keluarga di Indonesia. *Jurnal Al-Azhar Indonesia Seri Humaniora, Vol. 6, No. 1, 11-21*.
- Nurhayati, S. R., & Helmi, A. F. (2015). Marital flourishing: Kualitas perkawinan dalam teori eudaimonik. *Buletin Psikologi, 21(2)*, 68.
- Pearson, Judy C. (1983). *Interpersonal Communication: Clarity, Confidence & Concern*. Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Company.
- Rathus, J. H., Cavuoto, N., & Passarelli, V. (2006). Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT): A mindfulness-based treatment for intimate partner violence. *Mindfulness-based treatment approaches: Clinician's guide to evidence base and applications, 333-358*.
- Rozaq, Wahyu N. (2018). *Komunikasi Keluarga pada Pasangan Suami- Istri yang Terlibat Cyber Love Melalui Sosial Medi*