

# **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND MARITAL SATISFACTION ON QUALITY OF MARRIAGE AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN SELANGOR**

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**Abstract:** *Quality of marriage is a subjective evaluation of one's marriage relationship. One of the determinants of the quality of marriage was personality. The types of personality will influence the quality of the marital relationship. Hence, this study aims to determine the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction among married people in Selangor. Respondents of this study were 110 married people in urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor. This study used a set of questionnaires to get the data using three instruments: Personality Big Five Factor Inventory (BFI), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The overall results showed that married people in the urban area had the highest level of openness to experience (M=33.28) while married people in the rural area had the highest level of consensus on marital satisfaction (M=53.00). Meanwhile, married people in the urban area had the highest score for quality of marriage on conflict management level (M=1972) compared to suburban and rural areas. The findings also indicated that there are significant relationships between personality types and marital satisfaction among married people in urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor. The implication of the study has been discussed in the context of a marriage relationship and the personality types of people.*

**Keywords:** *Personality Traits, Marital Satisfaction, Quality of Marriage*

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## **Introduction**

Marriage is a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them and their children and between them and their in-laws (Haviland, Prins, McBride and Walrath, 2011). The definition of marriage varies according to different cultures, but it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged.

According to Selim (2015), the first purpose of marriage is companionship. Marriage is God's designed relationship for male and female, paired in marriage relationships where they enjoy intimacy and procreate children, achieving prosperity and continuity of man's existence on the earth. Life after marriage is very happy and meaningful for couples. Husband and wife will work together to achieve their marital goals and necessarily want happiness as a family. However, transitioning into the married lifestyle can be exciting yet stressful. The happiness of a family starts from the personality trait of the spouse. It is because personality traits shape the quality of their relationship. While from the quality of the marriage, it will result in the satisfaction of marriage. One of the determinants of the quality of the relationship was personality (Farooqi, 2014). In the Five Factor Model, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are five basic dimensions of personality (McCrae and John, 1992). The level of each personality, whether it is low or high will influence the quality of the marital relationship. Then, the quality of marriage will determine the level of marital satisfaction of married couples.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Marriage and Personality***

Marriage is a union between man and woman. It will also unite two different personalities into one relationship which mean their quality of marriage will be determined by this. For more than sixty years, personality variables have been a major focus of research studying the couples' relationship to explain and predict relationship quality and stability (Schneewind and Gerhard, 2002). Therefore, to understand an individual's marital adjustment, the personality of both spouses should be considered, as evidence by significant partner effect (Bouchard, Lussier and Sabourin, 1999). So, personality of both spouses will affect the marriage itself and will determine the marital satisfaction of marriage couples.

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. The study of personality focuses on two broad areas: One is understanding individual difference personality characteristics, such as sociability or irritability. The other is understanding how the various parts of a person come together as a whole (<http://www.apa.org>). The relationship between personality characteristics and quality of marriage can be measured by several methods. The method which is often used by using the Five Factor Model proposed by McCrae and John (1992). The five-factor model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience.

A study by Shamoradi, Maleki, Maleki, Shamoradi and Entesar Founamy (2014) found that there was a positive correlation between agreeableness and conscientiousness with marital satisfaction and there was a negative correlation between neuroticism and marital satisfaction. There is also a significant correlation between some of the personality characteristics with marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, Furukawa, Hori, Azuma and Nakano (2002) have implemented a study that deepens the relationship between the personalities of the spouse to the relationship marriage. They found that the wife had a high score conscientiousness describes their marriage relationship as more prosperous and stable. Wives who get high scores in stages agreeableness is happier because of lack of control husband. While the husband shows the extent of extraversion is important to make a marriage more prosperous and happier. Wolcott & Hughes (1999) have collected information of causes of divorce. They found that there are three main factors which are; (1) affective aspects included incompatibility, emergence of communication and infidelity problems, (2) behavioral violence and personality traits, and (3) external stresses such as mental and physical health, financial problems, and jobs.

A study by Gattis, Berns, Simpson and Christensen (2004) show a high degree of neuroticism, the level of agreeableness low and low levels of conscientiousness are contributing factors to dissatisfaction with the marriage. According to their research, it was found that the existence of neuroticism characteristics is significant in pairs which are unhappy when compared to a happy couple.

Personality traits also do have important role in determining marital quality of newly-wed couples. A study by Rumaya, Syah Qurratu Aini & Khairul Anwar (2014) with 549 Muslim newly-weds in Selangor, Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur revealed that conscientiousness and emotional stability has a significant relationship with the marital quality of the respondents. Thus, this can be implied that the role of personality and emotionally stable is pivotal for couples to undergo the adjustment process at the early stage of marriage.

### ***Marital Satisfaction Among Married Couples***

Happiness is an important variable in measuring the marital relationship. According to Stone & Shackelford (2006), marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and partner. Marital satisfaction is very important to ensure domestic harmony assured. If a couple is satisfied with their partner, then they live happily.

According to Amato, David, Alan and Stacy (2003), most recently spouses' satisfaction is seen as just one component of the multidimensional concept of marital quality. According to Frisco and Williams (2003) it is often found that perceived inequality in the division of household labor is negatively associated with marital satisfaction, especially for wives. It should be noted, however, that both the division of household labor and its subjective assessment are strongly dependent on the social context.

Hughes, Galinsky and Morris (1992) showed that family incompatibility and non-specific job increased marital tension and decreased marital companionship. The problems have also multiplied with the associated withdrawal of support system within the family and the breaking up of the joint family. However, this may have accorded greater independence to many of the working couples. A rethinking over some issues of significance is important in this context. Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000) stated marital satisfaction as a general sense of favorability toward the marital relationship.

Furthermore, Greenstein (2009) found out the association between marital satisfaction and female employment is likely to be mediated by the way in which the husband and wife participate in housework. In general, the wife's additional work outside the home should require a change in the division of household labor, as by. Correspondingly, frictions caused by the adjustment to the division of labor or a failure to cope with them may reduce the subjective well-being of the married couple.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study was to determine the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction on quality of marriage among married people. The other objective in this study to identify the types of personality, level of marital satisfaction and quality of marriage among married people in urban, suburban and rural area in Selangor.

## **Methodology**

### ***Method and Participants***

The study was conducted in Selangor. Three locations purposely selected for this study represent the urban, suburban and rural areas; Bangi, Salak Tinggi dan Dengkil. The questionnaire has been distributed randomly to respondents which are married people in these three areas. Due to the time, accessibility and cooperation from participants only 110 questionnaires were returned. All the respondents were married and from different background of religions.

### ***Measures***

Three instruments were used in this study. First, Big Five Personality Inventory by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae in 1970. This inventory has 44-items that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors which are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience. The reliability for this instrument is .83. This inventory using a Likert scale where 1=disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=neutral, 4=slightly agree and 5=agree. Second, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMMS) is a 3-item self-report instrument designed to measures marital quality. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). Total score ranges from 3 to 21, with high scores meaning better marital quality (Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, and Grigsby, 1983). Third, to measure the level of marital satisfaction of married couples, researcher use Dyadic Adjustment Scale Inventory (DAS). This inventory has 32 items and developed by G. Spanier (1976). According to Spanier (1976), DAS includes the following four subscales which are Dyadic Consensus (degree to which respondent agrees with partner), Dyadic Satisfaction (degree to which respondent feels satisfied with partner), Affection Expression (degree to which respondent agrees with partner regarding emotional affection) and Dyadic Cohesion (degree to which respondent and partner participate in activities together). The DAS is a well-known index with questions pertaining to marital satisfaction, cohesion, the level of consensus, and affectionate expression (e.g., “Do you confide in your spouse?”; “How often do you and your spouse quarrel?”) (Claxton, O’Rourke, Smith & DeLongis, 2011).

## **Results**

Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency, percentage, average, mean, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum used for describing information aimed at describing background, family context, level of five dimensions of personality, as well as level respondents' quality of marriage.

### ***Demographic Background of Respondents***

This section presents information from the demography data or respondents. The information is included gender, area of living, race, duration of marriage and level of education.

**Table 1: Demographic background of respondents**

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	34	30.9
Female	76	69.1

<u>Area of living</u>		
Urban	50	45.5
Suburban	43	39.1
Rural	17	15.5
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<u>Race/ethnicity</u>		
Malay	91	82.7
Indian	12	10.9
Chinese	3	2.7
Bumiputera	4	3.6
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<u>Duration of marriage</u>		
1 – 10 years	66	60.0
11 – 20 years	26	23.6
21 – 30 years	15	13.6
31 – 40 years	2	1.8
41 – 50 years	1	0.9
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<u>Level of education</u>		
Primary school	2	1.8
Secondary school	37	33.6
Diploma	29	26.4
Degree	37	33.6
Master	3	2.7
PhD	2	1.8

Table 1 shows the demographic information of respondents of the study. Most of the respondents were women (69.1%) and most of them were Malays race (82.7%). The duration of marriage of respondents in the range of 1-10 years (60%) while only one (0.9%) respondent have marriage relationship in 41-50 years. More than the half of the respondents were finished secondary school and obtained degree (67.2%), 26.4% have diploma, 2.7% have Master degree, 1.8% finished primary school and 1.8% a PhD holder.

***Types of Personality Traits among Married Couples in Urban, Suburban and Rural Areas.***

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation for personality traits of married people in urban, suburban and rural area.

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation for personality traits of married people in urban, suburban and rural area.**

	Urban		Suburban		Rural	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<b>Extraversion</b>	28.09	3.95	28.22	4.10	26.71	2.82
<b>Agreeableness</b>	32.83	4.58	32.48	3.83	30.53	3.95
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	30.87	4.88	31.65	3.52	28.65	4.40

<b>Neuroticism</b>	22.15	4.64	21.52	3.33	22.53	4.23
<b>Openness to experience</b>	33.28	3.54	33.43	4.15	32.41	4.96

The highest trait in urban area is openness to experience M=33.28, followed by agreeableness M=32.83, conscientiousness M=30.87, extraversion M=28.09, and the lowest rank is neuroticism M=22.15. Meanwhile, for highest trait in suburban area also openness to experience M=33.43, followed by agreeableness M=32.48, conscientiousness M=31.65, extraversion M=28.22, and the lowest is neuroticism M=21.52. For rural area the highest personality trait is openness to experience that indicates M=32.41, followed by agreeableness M=30.53, conscientiousness M=28.65, extraversion M=26.71, and the lowest rank is neuroticism M=22.53.

### ***The Level of Marital Satisfaction in Urban, Suburban and Rural Areas in Selangor***

In the table 3 show the distribution of constructs for Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). It is consisting of consensus, affection expression satisfaction and cohesion.

**Table 3: Level of marital satisfaction in urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor**

	<b>Consensus</b>	<b>Affection expression</b>	<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Cohesion</b>	<b>Total score marital satisfaction</b>
<b>Urban</b>					
<b>Mean</b>	50.21	9.51	30.21	19.77	109.70
<b>Std. deviation</b>	8.91	1.99	7.21	7.21	16.52
<b>Suburban</b>					
<b>Mean</b>	50.35	9.39	25.83	18.67	104.24
<b>Std. deviation</b>	8.89	2.27	4.68	3.92	13.52
<b>Rural</b>					
<b>Mean</b>	53.00	9.53	29.18	18.29	110.00
<b>Std. deviation</b>	16.16	1.59	4.48	4.50	19.51

In urban area, the highest construct of marital satisfaction is consensus M=50.21 and the least one is affection expression M=9.51. There is not much differences with result in suburban area. In suburban area, the highest construct of marital satisfaction is consensus subscale M=50.35 and the least one is affection expression M=9.39. Meanwhile in rural area, the highest construct of marital satisfaction is consensus M=53.00 and the least one is affection expression M=9.53. Overall, consensus is highest subscale and the least subscale is affection expression among married couples in urban, suburban and rural area in Selangor. The total score of marital satisfaction among married couple in Selangor is married couples in rural area M=110.00, followed by marital satisfaction in urban area M=109.70, and the least rank is marital satisfaction in suburban M=104.24. This shows that mostly married couples in rural areas are have high marital satisfaction than married couples in urban and suburban area in Selangor.

### ***Score of Quality of Marriage***

The table below show the mean and score of conflict management level of married people according to urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor.

**Table 4: Quality of marriage in urban, suburban and rural area.**

Area	Mean	Standard deviation	Conflict management level
Urban	16.04	3.68	19.72
Suburban	15.72	3.46	19.18
Rural	15.29	4.71	20

According to the table, the mean score for quality of marriage of couples in urban area are the highest M=16.04 with the conflict management level 19.72, followed by married couples in suburban with M=15.72 with the lowest conflict management level 19.18. The least rank is married couples in rural area with M=15.29 but with the highest conflict management level 20. Therefore, the score of quality of marriage among married couple in rural area in Selangor is the highest and the least one is married couples in suburban area. The higher the level of conflict management indicates the high quality of marriage. High scores indicate high level of satisfaction in marriage.

#### ***The relationship between personality and marital satisfaction***

The table below shows the correlation of personality traits and marital satisfaction among married people in urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor.

**Table 5: The relationship between personality and marital satisfaction among married people in urban, suburban and rural area in Selangor.**

		Personality	Marital Satisfaction
<b>Personality</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.195*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	110	.041
	N		110
<b>Marital Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.195*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	110	.041
	N		110

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The table above shows the correlation of personality traits of married people and their marital satisfaction in urban, suburban and rural areas in Selangor. There is significant relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction among married couples in Selangor. This Ho1 is accepted because there is a significant correlation between personality traits and marital satisfaction of married couples in Selangor. The correlation between two variables is significant at 0.05 level.

#### **Discussion**

According to the result, personality traits in urban, suburban and rural areas shows slightly similar results. The highest personality traits among married people particularly in suburban area with the type of openness to experience and the least personality traits is Neuroticism. Hence, this result can be relating to the finding by Oishi (2015), people with high in openness

to experiences tend to live in the city. Along with the development around it, the minds of the community are also growing and more open. Individual with high in openness tend to be more adventurous, creative, and open to try new thing. Meanwhile, low in Neuroticism are tending to be more stable and emotionally irrepresible (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Dyadic Adjustment Scale is consisting of consensus subscale, cohesion subscale, affection expression subscale and satisfaction subscale. Overall, consensus is highest level subscale and the least subscale is affection expression among married couples in urban, suburban and rural area in Selangor. Therefore, it's proved that married couples who lived in rural areas have high commitment, communication, conflict resolution, and interaction between spouses, have more leisure time together and have high intimacy and external support. In addition, married couples who lived in rural are still maintain and practices their values in relationship. They are appreciating their spouses more.

The highest score of quality of marriage among married couple is in rural area in Selangor. Married couples who lived in rural are still maintain and practices their values in relationship. Quality life of marriage leads to high marital satisfaction. Married couples in rural areas also have high conflict management level which are they emphasizes on relationship and holding back their emotions. They are emphasized on their family and will solve any conflict with a smooth way and avoid divorce. Personality traits is a stable trait in an individual that can affect human behavior. These features will also affect the adaptation of patterns, manufacturing decisions, pattern communication and management conflicts between couples.

According to the result, correlation between personality and marital satisfaction is significant. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with the previous study by Shahmoradi et al., (2014) proving that these internal factors will directly or indirectly affect the quality of marriage. Understanding the role of personality on intimate relationships such as marriage requires specialized knowledge and skills so that if there is any incompatibility between the couple in this aspect of the interior, the effort to adjust or modify should be done immediately by the couple involved.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

For future researches, studies across other ethnic groups are also encouraged so that differences and similarities about factors affecting the quality of marriage can be determined. It is also recommended to use qualitative or a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is used to increase understanding of the role of personality in the marriage.

### **Conclusion**

Personality is a very important factor in affecting the quality of husbands and wives. This study examines the influence of five different personality dimensions on quality of marriage to marital satisfaction. Married couples need to know and understand the effect of each dimension of personality. In marriage relationship, adjustments should be made if the personality of the two couples is incompatible. Compatibility of personality levels such as extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness for both partners may enhance the intimate relationships while high level of neuroticism should be avoided. Hence, this issue needs to be highlight and discuss during the couples attend the pre-marital course. One of the contents in this course should emphasize this issue by giving the information and skills to handle and manage the personality of couple.



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