

Marital Quality: An Empirical Comparison of Two Unidimensional Measures

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Abstract: Marital quality is a construct that is often interchangeably used with other constructs such as marital satisfaction, marital adjustment and marital happiness. This condition brought impact to the variations in its measurement. This research intended to validate the two most frequently used marital quality inventories, the Quality Marital Index (QMI) and Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) in the Indonesian version using factorial structure and psychometric properties. The participants of this study were 81 heterosexual couples (N=162) with average marriage duration 16.6 years, and all had a minimum of one child. Confirmatory Factor Analysis using Lisrell 9.3 revealed that RAS Indonesian form had better internal structure than QMI Indonesian form. The model of QMI was a poor fit, and the model of RAS with only 5 items was a close fit. RAS-Indonesian form had two items with low standardized factor loadings. Cultural bias in wording and other reasons for these findings are discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

The quality of marriage is a factor that has an important role in the success of a marriage, as being a major predictor of long-lasting marriage (Karney and Bradbury, 1995). It affects the wellbeing and life satisfaction of individuals (Fincham and Beach, 2010; Robles, 2014) and also affects the wellbeing of children in a marriage through better parenting (Malinen, et al., 2010). Poor marital quality has negative effects on individual wellbeing (Proulx, Helms, and Buehler, 2007), individual health (Smith and Baucom, 2017). Poor marital quality for those not yet divorced had more severe negative impact than marriage that ended in divorce (Gustavson, 2013). It led marital quality to become a topic in many marriage researches.

Marital quality has two form constructs, a multidimensional construct and a unidimensional construct. As a multidimensional construct, marital quality referred to a marriage condition characterized by good criteria including good adaptation, adequate communication, high marital happiness, integration, intimacy, consensus, pleasure, mutual companionship, and marital satisfaction (Spanier and Lewis, 1980; Johnson, et al., 1986; Hassebrauck and Fehr, 2002; Schneider,

2007; Chonody, et al., 2016). As a unidimensional construct, marital quality emphasized the individual global evaluation of the conditions of marriage, dyadic relationships, and their overall functioning (Spanier and Lewis, 1980; Norton, 1983; Fincham and Bradbury, 1987; Sabatelli, 1988; Schneider, 2007). Since it was a global subjective evaluation, the term marital quality was also used for marital satisfaction and marital happiness (Jackson, et al., 2014).

The extensive coverage from the marital quality construct brought an impact to the measurement of marital quality. There were many scales that could be used to measure marital quality, named Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS), ENRICH, Quality Marital Index, Relationships Assessment Scale, Couples Satisfaction Inventory, and many others. Each scale has its unique characteristics, and should be considered when using it.

There were two main categories in marital quality construct. The first was the unidimensional and the second was the multidimensional. Each approach had pros. The multidimensional construct of marital quality covered the complexity of the marital conditions that contributed to the quality of the marriage (Fowers and Owenz, 2010). The unidimensional construct was more useful for theory

and research development because it avoided overlapping with other variables such as communication, conflict and others (Fincham and Bradbury, 1987).

The condition of marriage in Indonesia is indicated by some problems, which were related to poor marital quality. Data from the High Court of East Java Province (2017) showed that most divorce cases happened because of couples' disharmony and too many disputes in marriage relationships. Almost 31.5% of problems that made couples divorce in 2014-2016 were due to poor marital quality. Other problems in marriage and family that also increased recently such as infidelity and domestic violence could be indicated in poor marital quality, since there was no happiness in couples' relationships.

1.1 Marital Quality Measurements

Two scales of marital quality that had been used widely in many researches because of their pros in the number of items were Relationships Assessment Scale (RAS) and Quality Marital Index (QMI). These scales contained 6-7 items. It was more practical in the operationalizations, compared to MSS, which had 73 items (Schneider, 2007). Another marital quality scale was the Kansas Measurement Scale, which had the fewest items, only three items, and meant confirmatory factor analysis could not be performed. Therefore, this research focused on comparison of the two marital quality measurements, which were QMI and RAS Indonesian version.

QMI and RAS English version both had good psychometric properties, such as strong reliability, and had already been used widely in many researches. Chonody, et al. (2016) reported that QMI had strong reliability ($\alpha = .94$), and RAS also had good reliability ($\alpha = .86$). Heyman, Sayers, and Bellack (1994) identified that the two scales (RAS and QMI) both had excellent correlations with relevant variables such as dyadic adjustment. But Chonody, et al. (2016) also mentioned that it still needed further testing to determine its applicability with a diverse sample, as the original sample was drawn from Midwest backgrounds. Therefore, this study aimed to compare the validation of the two measurements using Indonesian wording and Indonesian subjects.

1.2 Marital Quality Measurements in Indonesia

Identifying underlying causes and factors that affect marital quality requires a robust and culturally appropriate measurement, as marital quality is a cultural topic (Shen, 2015). In doing so, an adapted version of the marital quality scale is needed.

Only few researches exist on adaptation of marital quality measurement Indonesian version, e.g. research by Rumondor (2013), and Wahyuningsih, et al. (2013). The tool developed by Rumondor (2013) measured marital satisfaction for young adults. It was built by combining three marital measurements already developed: Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), ENRICH marital satisfaction (Fowers and Olson, 1993) and the Marriage Satisfaction Questionnaire (Sadarjoen, 2004). It had 58 items and covered 9 dimensions (communication, balance of role sharing, openness, agreement, intimacy, social intimacy, sexuality, financial, spiritual). The other marital measurement that developed in Indonesia was Indonesian Moslem Marital Quality Scale (IMMQS). This scale focused on measuring marital quality in Muslim marriage. The 13-item IMMQS consisted three sub-scales: the 7-item friendship, the 3-item satisfaction with children, and the 3-item harmony.

The two marital measurements explained above used a multi-dimensional construct of marital quality, and had specific utilization. The one from Rumondor (2013) was for early adulthood stage, and the other from Wahyuningsih (2013) for Muslim couples. Therefore, this research intended to analyze marital quality measurement as a unidimensional construct for general use, since the unidimensional construct of marital quality is more useful for research than a multi-dimensional construct (Fincham and Bradbury, 1987).

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

The population of this study was married couples, who were not in commuter marriage, were still in their first marriage, and already had at least one child. All couples lived in the city of Surabaya. Samples were obtained through the snowball sampling method.

The participants used in this study were 81 Indonesian heterosexual married couples (N=162

subjects). Couples were still married, not in commute marriage, and already had at least one child. Participants were recruited through information from various friends who had access to ask participants for willingness to join the research. Husbands and wives filled in the questionnaires separately and only questionnaires filled in completely were used in this study. Husbands' mean age was 44.1 years old (SD = 7.341) and wives' was 40.5 years old (SD = 8.74). Average marriage' duration was 15.38 years (SD = 7.85). Husbands' education, 64.2% had Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree. Wives' education, 66.6% had Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree. All husbands were fully employed, and 81.5% of wives were fully employed. Most participants were Muslims (66.7%). Most participants (70%) had 1-2 children and many of their first children were above 12 years old.

2.2 Measurement

2.2.1 Quality Marital Index

The Quality Marital Index created by Norton (1983) was a 6-item scale measuring the conditions of the marriage based on global subjective evaluation about the condition of marriage through the use of global semantic words such as "good" and "strong" (Norton 1983). Items scored using a seven-point scale anchored at 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The sixth item was measured on a 10-point Likert type scale, anchored with 1 = very low and 10 = very high. For data analysis the 10-point scale of item six was converted to 7-point, so all items had the same scale.

QMI correlated very strongly with Dyadic Adjustment Scale and had high internal consistency, good convergent and discriminant validity correlations (Heyman et al., 1994; Chonody et al., 2016).

In this study, QMI measured unidimensional marital quality (N = 162, M = 38.83, SD = 4.60).

2.2.2 Relationship Assessment Scale

The Relationship Assessment Scale created by Hendrick (1988) was 7-item scale as a unifactorial measure of global relationship satisfaction focusing on how well the partner meets their needs, how well the relationship compares to others, and regrets about the relationship. All items scored using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (e.g. how well does your husband/wife fulfill your needs?) All items

were favorable items, except item number 4 (e.g. how often you wish you were not involved in relations with your spouse) and 7 (e.g. how many problems in your relationships with your spouse), which were unfavorable.

RAS measured unidimensional marital quality (N=162, M= 26.59, SD = 2.87)

2.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

The procedure of test adaptation in this study was done through the process of selecting a translator, doing the forward-backward translation, evaluating if the content of the test and the wording in a second language could measure the same construct as the first language checking the equivalence of the test in the second language and culture, and conducting validation analysis. These processes were conducted based on International Test Commission Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests (2017). For validation analysis this study used a contemporary approach in which all validities should be conceptualized under one framework and construct validity included content, internal structure and relations to other variables (Cook and Beckman, 2006; Brown, 2010; Rios and Wells, 2013).

Data was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the internal structure and run with Lisrell 9.3 student's version.

3 RESULT

The result of this study is described in contents, internal structure, and relations to other variables.

3.1 Content Analysis

Evidence for content in this research was collected based on expert judgment evaluation related to construct definition, the clearance of the tools' purpose, and the wording of items. In this research, there were three experts in clinical and marriage research. There was some input from the experts related to wording, such as a suggestion to use the words "Mr. and Mrs." replacing the word "you", in both scales. Other suggestions from experts on the QMI scale were changing the word "harmony" to "stable" (item number 2, e.g. My relationships with spouse is very stable), "one team" to "part of team" (item number 5, e.g. I feel part of a team with my spouse). For RAS scale, the experts' suggestions for wording were using the word "relasi" not

“hubungan” (Indonesian language) for translation of “relationships”.

There were notes from experts related to the word “good” in item number 1 of QMI (e.g. we have a good marriage), as it could be interpreted by Indonesian subjects too widely. Another note from an expert for item number 4 of RAS (e.g. how often do you wish you were never involved in relations with your spouse) as using the word “often” and “never” in one sentence could be confusing when answering.

3.2 Internal Structure

The confirmatory factor analysis for the Quality Marital Index Indonesian form was a poor fit for the theoretical model ($\chi^2/df = 82.43/9$, RMSEA = .227, GFI = .843, CFI = .928).

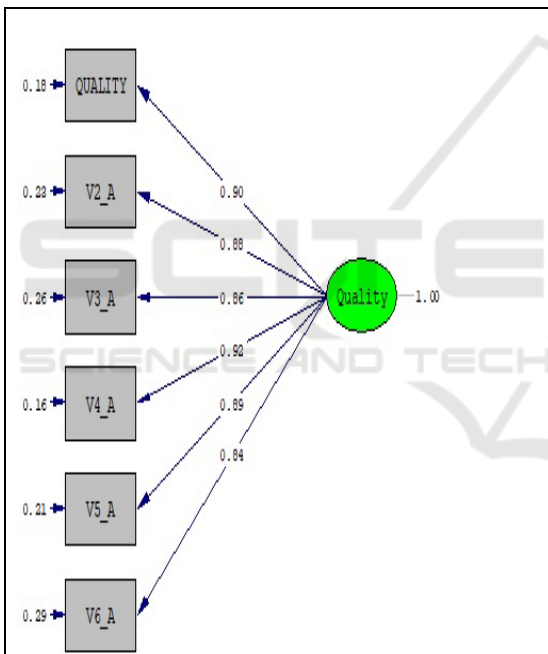


Figure 1: CFA of Quality Marital Index.

As illustrated in Figure 1, even though all items had strong factor loadings for marital quality, the model was not fit. For reliability, this scale had strong composite reliability ($\alpha = .955$).

For Relationships Assessment Scale (RAS) Indonesian form the confirmatory factor analysis was run twice. The first trial was using all items (7 items) as the original RAS. The second trial was using only 5 items for RAS Indonesian form with only items that had strong factor loadings.

Result for CFA of RAS Indonesian form in the first trial showed a poor fit ($\chi^2/df = 76.14/14$,

RMSEA = .17, GFI = .881, CFI = .897) (see Figure 2).

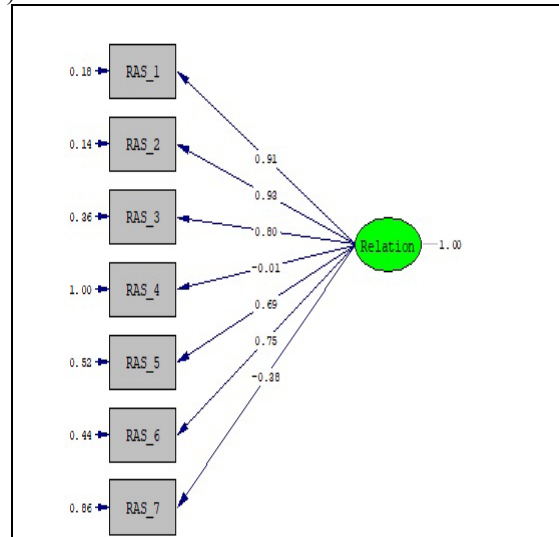


Figure 2: CFA of Relationship Assessment Scale (7 items)

As illustrated in Figure 2, standardized factor loadings for relationship quality for items number 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 ranged from .75 – .92 meaning these five items had high contribution to latent variable, and were recommended for use in the scale without any revision at all. However, items number 4 and 7 had low factor loadings (see Figure 2). These two items showed a weak contribution to the latent variable. Especially, item number 4 showed not only weak but reverse correlation to the latent variable.

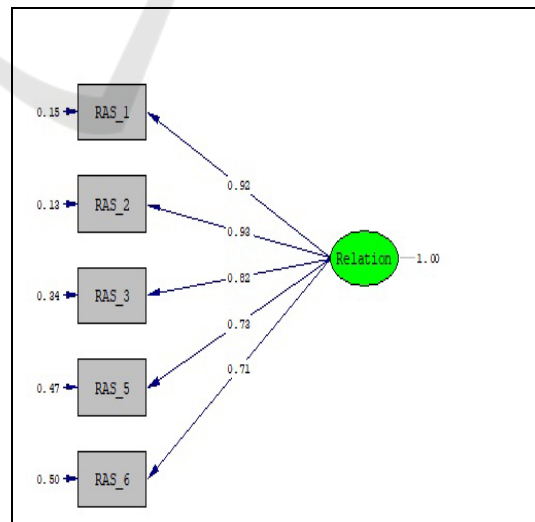


Figure 3: CFA of Relationship Assessment Scale (5 items)

Since there were two items with low factor loadings, item number 4 and item number 7 (see

Figure 2), then we did the second trial. The second trial was using only five items. Item number 4 and item number 7 were dropped.

Results for CFA of RAS Indonesian form with only 5 items in the second trial showed a moderate fit ($X^2/df = 11.5/5$, RMSEA = .09, GFI = .973, CFI = .989) (see Figure 3).

The score of composite reliability also showed improvement (first trial $\alpha = .842$, second trial $\alpha = .912$). It meant that Relationship Assessment Scale Indonesian form could use only 5 items. Using the whole 7 items of Relationship Assessment Scale needed revision on item number 4 and item number 7.

3.3 Relation to Other Variables

Since QMI and RAS were the same global measurement of marital quality, so for the evidence of relations to other variables the two measurements would be correlated. The correlation score of QMI and RAS would be the evidence of validation for the relations to other variable aspects. QMI Indonesian form and 7-items RAS Indonesian form had significant positive correlation ($r = .499$, $p = .00$). QMI Indonesian form and 5-items RAS Indonesian form had significant positive correlation ($r = .752$, $p = .00$).

4 DISCUSSION

Results from the confirmatory factor analysis showed that both scales (QMI Indonesian form and RAS Indonesian form) fit poorly to the theoretical model. It meant that the data did not give the same model as the English version. The QMI Indonesian form and RAS Indonesian form could not measure the marital quality as the original one did.

These weaknesses could come from many factors such as the meaning of wording and relevancies within an Indonesian context. QMI Indonesian form measured global evaluation about marriage using semantic words (e.g. we had a good marriage). The word "good marriage" in this item could be biased in interpretation, because it covered too many dimensions of marriage. Other semantic words in QMI items could be biased such as stable (e.g. my relationship with my spouse is very stable), and the word strong (e.g. our marriage is strong). Stable and strong could be understood in many different conditions by each subject. It might also be culturally different.

The confirmatory factor analysis of RAS Indonesian form with the 7 items, as in the original one, revealed that the model was also a poor fit. It found that there were two items with weak contribution to the latent variable. The weak items were items number 4 and number 7 (see Figure 2). These weaknesses could come from the negative statement of these two items. The wording in item number 4 was confusing because it used contradiction in a word in one item (often and never). One of the expert judgements had already mentioned it too. Item number 4 (How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?) was difficult to answer because it could be biased in its meaning.

Item number 7 (How many problems are there in your relationship?) was also not a good item, because of its weak contribution to the latent variable. It asked about marital problems evidence, and it had weak factor loadings. It could be interpreted that marital problems could not always be indicators of poor relationship quality. A good marriage would have problems too.

In the second trials of CFA for RAS Indonesian form with only 5 items (dropping items 4 and 7) it seemed to support the fitness of this scale. The reliability of this scale was also improved. Even though not giving a good fit, this 5-item RAS Indonesian form showed a close fit. It could conclude that a 5-item RAS Indonesian form measured marital quality better than the 7-item RAS Indonesian form, and the QMI Indonesian form. For future research, using a complete RAS Indonesian form still needs revisions for items number 4 and 7.

QMI Indonesian form and 7-item RAS Indonesian form correlated only moderately, but became strong when correlated with a 5-item RAS Indonesian form. These findings could be related to the improvement of internal structure of a 5-item RAS Indonesian form. The moderate correlation of QMI Indonesian form and RAS Indonesian form could indicate that each had a specific focus. Both of these scales measure unidimensional marital quality, but in QMI, marital quality is measured globally by using semantic words (e.g. good marriage, strong relationships, stable marriage). In RAS, marital quality was evaluated in more specific aspects (e.g. fulfillment need, love, satisfaction). Using these scales should consider the specific characteristics of each scale.

This study was done only with participants already married for mostly 15 years and who not need marriage interventions. Therefore, it did not

result from discrimination scores from these two measures.

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