

## THE INFLUENCE OF STRESS SYMPTOMS AND COPING STRATEGIES ON THE SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF LONG-DISTANCE MARRIAGE FAMILIES

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### Abstract

Long-distance marriage poses profound psychological challenges for women, particularly in sustaining emotional well-being amid prolonged physical separation from their spouses. This study investigates the extent to which stress symptoms and coping strategies influence the subjective well-being of wives in long-distance marital arrangements. Employing a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, the research involved 41 wives residing in Bandung, Indonesia, who live apart from their husbands and are parenting adolescent children aged 13 to 21 years. Respondents were recruited using a non-probability snowball sampling technique. Descriptive results indicate that participants generally experienced mild stress symptoms, demonstrated moderate levels of coping strategies, and reported high subjective well-being. Correlation analyses revealed a significant negative association between stress symptoms and subjective well-being, while problem-focused coping strategies exhibited a significant positive correlation. Further regression analysis confirmed that stress symptoms negatively predicted subjective well-being ( $\beta = -0.44, p < 0.01$ ), whereas coping strategies positively contributed to it ( $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.05$ ). These findings underscore the critical role of adaptive coping mechanisms in mitigating psychological distress and enhancing emotional resilience among women managing long-distance marriages. This study offers valuable empirical insights for family practitioners and mental health professionals in developing culturally responsive interventions to support women in trans-local family structures.

Keywords: coping strategies, emotional resilience, long-distance marriage, stress symptoms, subjective well-being.

## PENGARUH GEJALA STRES DAN STRATEGI KOPING TERHADAP KESEJAHTERAAN SUBJEKTIF KELUARGA DENGAN PERNIKAHAN JARAK JAUH

### Abstrak

Pernikahan jarak jauh menciptakan tantangan psikologis yang kompleks bagi istri, terutama dalam mempertahankan kesejahteraan emosional di tengah keterpisahan fisik yang berkepanjangan dari pasangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji sejauh mana gejala stres dan strategi koping memengaruhi kesejahteraan subjektif pada istri yang menjalani pernikahan jarak jauh. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain potong lintang, melibatkan 41 istri berdomisili di Kota Bandung, Indonesia, yang hidup terpisah dari suami dan memiliki anak remaja berusia 13 hingga 21 tahun. Sampel diperoleh melalui teknik snowball sampling non-probabilistik. Hasil deskriptif menunjukkan bahwa partisipan mengalami gejala stres dalam kategori ringan, menerapkan strategi koping pada tingkat sedang, dan memiliki tingkat kesejahteraan subjektif yang tinggi. Hasil analisis korelasi mengungkapkan hubungan negatif signifikan antara gejala stres dan kesejahteraan subjektif, serta hubungan positif signifikan antara strategi koping berfokus pada pemecahan masalah dan kesejahteraan subjektif. Uji regresi lebih lanjut memperkuat temuan tersebut, dengan gejala stres secara signifikan memprediksi penurunan kesejahteraan subjektif ( $\beta = -0,44; p < 0,01$ ), sementara strategi koping memberikan kontribusi positif signifikan ( $\beta = 0,38; p < 0,05$ ). Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya peran strategi koping adaptif dalam mereduksi tekanan psikologis dan meningkatkan ketahanan emosional pada perempuan yang menghadapi dinamika pernikahan jarak jauh. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi empiris yang relevan bagi praktisi keluarga dan profesional kesehatan mental dalam merancang intervensi berbasis konteks budaya untuk mendukung perempuan dalam struktur keluarga trans-lokal.

Kata kunci: gejala stres, kesejahteraan subjektif, ketahanan emosional, pernikahan jarak jauh, strategi koping

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## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of long distance marriage has become an increasingly relevant subject of sociological and psychological inquiry, particularly in the context of contemporary Indonesian society. Defined as a legally recognized marital relationship in which spouses reside in geographically separated locations and are unable to engage in daily physical interaction, long distance marriage represents a distinct family configuration that challenges traditional expectations of cohabitation and shared domestic responsibilities (Jimenez, 2010). While prevalent across both developing and developed countries, this form of marital arrangement remains underdocumented in Indonesia. Existing census instruments do not adequately capture the presence of spatially separated couples within households, resulting in a lack of national data regarding the scope and characteristics of long distance marriages (Anisah et al., 2023). In contrast, countries such as the United States have accumulated longitudinal statistics on the subject. A survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships indicated that in 2005, approximately 3.5 million individuals were involved in long distance marriages, a figure that increased to 7.2 million by 2011, highlighting the rapid expansion of this family arrangement (Anisah et al., 2023).

The decision to enter a long distance marriage is frequently influenced by structural and socioeconomic considerations. Common drivers include the pursuit of higher education, job relocation, and career advancement opportunities that may be geographically constrained. Many couples choose to live apart as a calculated response to unequal labor markets and educational access, aiming to secure economic stability and professional fulfillment (Anisah et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, economic opportunities remain highly centralized in urban areas, particularly on the island of Java and in several large metropolitan centers. This concentration has prompted significant internal migration, as individuals relocate in search of better wages and living standards unavailable in their regions of origin (Hartini & Setiawan, 2022; Suminar & Kaddi, 2018).

Although long distance marriage may serve as a rational response to macroeconomic pressures, it often introduces substantial emotional and psychological strain into family life. Wives, in particular, are disproportionately affected due to their dual roles as primary caregivers and *de facto* heads of households. The absence of a spouse results in increased domestic workload and emotional isolation, as they are left to manage parenting responsibilities, financial management, and household affairs independently (Litiloly & Swastiningsih, 2014). According to Putri et al. (2023), wives in long distance marriages often report diminished well-being and increased perceived burden, particularly when caring for adolescent children without the support of a co-resident partner. The absence of instrumental and emotional support from the husband significantly limits the capacity for shared decision-making and mutual emotional reinforcement within the family unit.

Adolescence represents a particularly critical developmental stage in which children require consistent parental involvement, especially from both mother and father figures. Flouri and Buchanan (2002) emphasize that the presence of a father plays a pivotal role in fostering adolescent self-esteem, life satisfaction, and emotional regulation. Amirah (2020) reported that 93.8 percent of mothers in long distance marriages expressed deep concern about the long-term psychosocial outcomes of children raised without daily paternal involvement. Similarly, Arditti (2005) argues that the father figure contributes uniquely to the social and emotional development of children, particularly in negotiating peer relationships and identity formation. The absence of a father during adolescence may result in increased vulnerability to behavioral issues, reduced emotional security, and strained parent-child relationships.

Family systems scholars such as Duvall (1977) have noted that families with adolescent children often experience heightened conflict due to generational tensions and the adolescent's increasing desire for independence. At this stage, effective parenting requires a coordinated approach in which both parents contribute to guidance, discipline, and emotional support. In families undergoing long distance marriage, however, this shared parenting model is disrupted. Wives are often required to navigate adolescent behavioral and emotional challenges alone, without the stabilizing influence of the father (Margian & Ekayati, 2013). This prolonged burden may lead to chronic stress, marital dissatisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. Berliantin and Ansyah (2021) identify long distance marriage as a significant psychosocial stressor for wives, particularly when the separation is extended over a long duration without sufficient emotional and social support.

Chronic stress not only affects a woman's physical health but also compromises her psychological well-being. In the context of long distance marriage, stress symptoms may manifest in the form of anxiety, irritability, sleep disturbances, and emotional fatigue. These symptoms, if not effectively managed, may deteriorate a woman's subjective well-being, which refers to her overall evaluation of life satisfaction, emotional

experiences, and psychological functioning. Subjective well-being is an essential component of mental health and is influenced by individual coping resources and external support systems. According to Soulsby and Bennett (2015), the ability to maintain subjective well-being under marital strain depends largely on the effectiveness of coping strategies and the availability of perceived social support. Coping strategies, broadly categorized into problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches, serve as psychological mechanisms for adapting to stress. Problem-focused coping involves addressing the source of stress through planning and active problem-solving, while emotion-focused coping is oriented toward managing emotional responses and minimizing distress.

Wives in long distance marriages must often rely on these coping mechanisms to sustain emotional equilibrium and maintain family functionality. The presence or absence of effective coping strategies may determine whether stress escalates into psychological dysfunction or is successfully mitigated. Furthermore, the role of social support is critical in buffering the negative effects of marital separation. Emotional support from extended family, friends, community networks, and even digital communication with spouses can significantly influence how women perceive and respond to their circumstances (Soulsby & Bennett, 2015).

Despite the growing prevalence of long distance marriages in Indonesia, limited empirical research has focused on the intersection of stress, coping, and subjective well-being among women in such arrangements, particularly those raising adolescent children. The psychosocial dynamics experienced by these women require urgent scholarly attention, not only to advance theoretical understanding but also to inform targeted interventions in family and mental health services. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how stress symptoms and coping strategies influence the subjective well-being of wives who are managing long distance marriages while raising teenagers.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are as follows: (1) to identify the characteristics of families in long distance marriage, including stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being; (2) to analyze the relationships between stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being among these families; and (3) to examine the extent to which stress symptoms and coping strategies influence subjective well-being in wives who are parenting adolescents in long distance marriage contexts.

## METHODS

This study applied a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the influence of stress symptoms and coping strategies on the subjective well-being of wives engaged in long-distance marital relationships while raising adolescent children. The research was conducted between January and March 2024 in Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. The selection of Bandung as the study location was purposive, based on demographic data from the Department of Population and Civil Registration (2022), which indicated that Bandung had the highest number of legally married residents in West Java. In 2022, the city recorded a total population of 1,213,012 people, with a labor force participation rate of 65.31 percent and an open unemployment rate of 11.46 percent. These demographic indicators reflect the city's strong economic pull, often leading to labor migration and physical separation among married couples, making it a relevant context for this study.

The target population comprised legally married women residing in Bandung City whose husbands live in geographically distant locations. Inclusion criteria included: the respondent is legally married and currently not living in the same residence as her husband; the frequency of physical meetings with the husband is no more than once every two weeks; the respondent has at least one adolescent child aged between 11 and 21 years; and the respondent permanently resides in Bandung City. Respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically snowball sampling. This approach was selected due to the unavailability of an official database or sampling frame for families in long-distance marital arrangements. The use of snowball sampling allowed for the identification of eligible participants through referral networks, which is particularly effective when studying hidden or hard-to-reach populations.

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of several sections: family demographic characteristics, stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being. Family demographic characteristics included the mother's age, the child's age, the duration and intensity of marital separation, the mother's educational background, occupational status, family size, and per capita income. Stress symptoms were measured using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) developed by Radloff (1977), which consists of 20 items rated on a four-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). This instrument demonstrated high reliability,

with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.839. Coping strategies were assessed using a modified version of the Ways of Coping Scale originally developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1985). From the original 66 items, 30 were retained and adapted to the Indonesian context, capturing both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping dimensions. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.775. Subjective well-being was measured using a 30-item scale developed by Sunarti (2021), covering economic, social, and psychological aspects of well-being. Responses were scored on a seven-point Likert scale, where higher scores reflected greater subjective well-being. This instrument exhibited excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.958.

Data obtained from the interviews were processed using Microsoft Excel 2019 and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data processing involved entry, editing, coding, cleaning, and scoring. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values of each research variable. Inferential analysis was performed to examine the relationships and effects between variables. Pearson correlation tests were used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between family characteristics, stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the influence of stress symptoms and coping strategies on subjective well-being, while controlling for demographic characteristics.

To facilitate interpretation, total scores for each variable were converted into index scores and categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high. Categorization of stress symptom indices was based on Bloom's Cut-Off Points, following Asiah and Hastuti (2014), with score intervals of 0–26.66 for low, 26.67–53.33 for moderate, and 53.34–80.00 for high. For coping strategies and subjective well-being, Bloom's classification as applied by Sunarti et al. (2005) was used, with score categories of low (<60.0), moderate (60.0–79.0), and high ( $\geq 80.0$ ). This methodological framework ensures the validity and reliability of findings and allows for a rigorous analysis of the psychological dynamics experienced by women in long-distance marriage contexts, particularly in relation to their ability to cope with stress and maintain subjective well-being while raising adolescent children.

## RESULTS

### Family Characteristics

The demographic profile of respondents in this study reflects a sample dominated by individuals in middle adulthood. The average age of wives was 47.83 years, with 95.10 percent categorized as middle-aged, while the remaining 4.9 percent were in early adulthood. Similarly, husbands had an average age of 49.85 years, with 92.7 percent in middle adulthood and a small proportion (2.4 percent) classified as late adulthood. These age characteristics suggest that the respondents were generally in a mature and potentially stable phase of life, which may influence their approach to managing family responsibilities under long-distance marriage conditions.

Children in these families were predominantly in the late adolescent stage, with an average age of 16.63 years and 35.5 percent of children falling within this range. This finding is important because adolescence is a critical developmental phase that demands emotional and supervisory support from both parents. In the context of long-distance marriage, the presence of only one parent at home may increase parenting strain and emotional demands on the mother.

Further insight into the long-distance marriage dynamics is provided by data on the duration of marital separation. More than four-fifths of the respondents (80.5 percent) had experienced long-distance marriage for over a year, and the average length of separation was notably high at 11.37 years. This reflects not only the structural permanence of such marital arrangements but also the potential cumulative psychological effects over time. In terms of contact with the husband, the majority of respondents (65.9 percent) met their spouses twice a week, which was the most frequent meeting pattern. However, a small but significant portion (2.4 percent) reported meeting their spouses only once a year, underscoring the wide variability in marital interaction.

Educational attainment among wives was relatively high, with 87.8 percent having completed more than 12 years of education, equivalent to university-level qualifications, and an average educational duration of 15.71 years. All husbands in the study had completed tertiary education, which indicates that the sample consisted of relatively educated families. This could imply a higher level of access to resources, better decision-making capacity, and a stronger awareness of mental health and parenting practices.

Employment status data showed that 41.5 percent of wives were employed in the private or state-owned sectors, while 39 percent were full-time housewives. The employment of wives in this study may have implications for their coping capacity, financial independence, and social support access. Most husbands (92.7 percent) were also employed in the formal sector, suggesting stable income sources. Income levels supported this observation, with more than half of the families (56.1 percent) earning over IDR 7,500,001 monthly. On the contrary, only 2.4 percent reported incomes below IDR 500,000 or within the IDR 1,500,001–3,500,000 range, indicating minimal economic hardship across the sample. Regarding family size, 68.3 percent of respondents belonged to nuclear families, with an average family size of 4.29 persons, indicating a moderately sized household structure.

### Stress Symptoms

Respondents' psychological stress levels were assessed using the CES-D scale, which classified symptoms into mild, moderate, and severe categories. As shown in Table 1, a substantial majority (70.7 percent) reported only mild stress symptoms, with an average score of 20.77 and a standard deviation of 10.97. These findings imply that most wives were experiencing manageable emotional states and demonstrated resilience despite prolonged separation from their spouses. Typical indicators in this group included feelings of hope, emotional stability, and satisfaction with personal achievements.

Nevertheless, 29.3 percent of respondents were categorized under moderate stress levels. These women reported more intense emotional struggles, such as frequent sadness, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, and reduced motivation. Such symptoms suggest that while they may not have reached clinical severity, the emotional burdens of long-distance marriage were beginning to impact their psychological well-being and daily functioning.

Table 1 Distribution of examples by category, minimum and maximum values, average and standard deviation of stress symptoms

Category	Stress Symptoms	
	n	%
Low	29	70,7
Currently	12	29,3
Height	0	0,0
Total	41	100,0
Min-Max	0-45.00	
Rerata±SD	20.77±10.97	

### Coping Strategies

The study also evaluated respondents' coping mechanisms through two primary dimensions: problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Table 2 presents the distribution of coping levels. The mean total coping index was 66.83 (SD = 6.47), with the vast majority (82.9 percent) of respondents falling within the moderate coping range. This finding implies that respondents actively utilized adaptive strategies to manage emotional and situational stress.

In the problem-focused dimension, 80.5 percent of mothers adopted strategies such as seeking solutions, taking calculated actions, and analyzing problems rationally. These approaches are often associated with effective problem resolution and psychological adjustment. Emotion-focused coping also scored moderately, with 78 percent of respondents using methods such as emotional expression, self-distraction, and spiritual surrender to reduce emotional tension. Although less directly solution-oriented, these strategies still contributed to emotional regulation, particularly in the context of minimal spousal support.

Table 2 Distribution of examples by category, minimum and maximum values, average and standard deviation of coping strategies

Evaluation of Coping Strategies								
Coping Strategy	Category						Min-Max	Mean±SD
	Low		Currently		Height			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Problem Focused	6	14.60	33	80.50	2	4.90	50-90	68.86±9.12
Emotion Focused	8	19.50	32	78.00	1	2.40	55-83.33	65.81±6.41
Total Coping Strategy	6	14.60	34	82.90	1	2.40	56.67-82.22	66.83±6.47

### Subjective Well-Being

An in-depth evaluation of the subjective well-being dimensions including economic, social, and psychological well-being—revealed generally positive findings across the sample. As detailed in Table 3, 70.7 percent of respondents reported high levels of overall well-being, with a mean index score of 85.20 (SD = 12.03). This suggests that despite physical separation from their spouses, most wives perceived their quality of life to be satisfactory.

From an economic standpoint, 53.7 percent of mothers reported high satisfaction with their financial stability, housing, and ability to meet children's educational needs. The average economic well-being score was 79.15 (SD = 19.17). This reflects the role of financial security in buffering psychological stress and enhancing perceived control over life circumstances. In the social domain, 58.5 percent of respondents fell into the high category, with a mean score of 82.48 (SD = 14.17), reflecting strong interpersonal connections, particularly with extended family and children.

Psychological well-being scored the highest among all three dimensions, with an average of 87.03 (SD = 11.71) and 73.2 percent of respondents falling in the high category. Wives in this group reported a sense of life purpose, emotional stability, and satisfaction with family dynamics, suggesting that emotional adaptation is possible even in the absence of co-resident spousal support.

Table 3 Distribution of examples by category, minimum and maximum values, average and standard deviation of subjective well-being

Subjective Well-Being	Category						Min-Max	Mean±SD
	Low		Currently		Height			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Economic Aspects	6	14.6	13	31.7	22	53.7	32.50-100.0	79.15±19.17
Social Aspects	3	7.3	14	34.1	24	58.5	48.33-100.0	82.48±14.17
Psychological Aspects	0	0.00	11	26.8	30	73.2	60.00-100.0	87.03±11.71
Total Subjective Well-Being	2	4.9	10	24.4	29	70.7	56.67-100.0	85.20±12.03

### Relationship Between Variables

To explore the relationships between demographic variables, stress symptoms, coping strategies, and well-being, correlation analysis was conducted. The findings, as presented in Table 4, revealed several significant patterns. Husband's age was positively correlated with coping strategies ( $r = 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that older spouses may offer more emotional support or model resilience, which contributes to stronger coping responses in wives. In contrast, the child's age was significantly correlated with economic ( $r = 0.395$ ), psychological ( $r = 0.333$ ), and total subjective well-being ( $r = 0.343$ ), suggesting that older children may assume greater responsibilities or provide emotional companionship.

Meeting intensity showed a strong positive correlation with stress symptoms ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), reinforcing that infrequent contact with one's spouse may intensify emotional burden. Furthermore, meeting frequency was significantly associated with greater use of emotion-focused coping ( $r = 0.325$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which may act as a psychological buffer in the absence of practical spousal involvement.

Stress symptoms showed a significant negative relationship with all aspects of subjective well-being: economic ( $r = -0.388$ ), social ( $r = -0.457$ ), psychological ( $r = -0.563$ ), and total well-being ( $r = -0.500$ ), all at  $p < 0.01$ . These findings confirm that higher levels of stress reduce perceived life satisfaction. In contrast, coping strategies—especially problem-focused coping—were positively correlated with social well-being ( $r = 0.345$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and overall well-being ( $r = 0.317$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Total coping strategies also positively influenced economic ( $r = 0.332$ ), social ( $r = 0.315$ ), and overall well-being ( $r = 0.326$ ), highlighting their protective psychological function.

Table 4 Correlation coefficient values for family characteristics, stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being

Variable	GS	PFC	EFC	SK	KSE	KSS	KSP	KS
Wife's age	0.029	0.232	0.273	0.289	0.305	0.125	0.142	0.204
Husband's age	-0.028	0.115	0.256	0.223	0.365*	0.223	0.217	0.288
Child's age	-0.113	-0.028	0.044	0.016	0.395*	0.242	0.333*	0.343*

Table 4 Correlation coefficient values for family characteristics, stress symptoms, coping strategies, and subjective well-being (continue)

Variable	GS	PFC	EFC	SK	KSE	KSS	KSP	KS
Length of separation (0= $\leq$ 12 months, 1= >12 months)	-0.077	0.105	0.089	0.108	0.173	0.262	0.222	0.236
Intensity of meetings (0= $\leq$ 3 months, 1= >3 months)	0.466**	0.044	0.325*	0.235	-0.210	-0.101	-0.130	-0.156
Wife's length of education	-0.110	0.071	0.036	0.057	-0.235	-0.162	-0.113	-0.184
Wife's occupation (0=not working, 1=working)	0.095	0.147	0.024	0.085	-0.049	-0.192	-0.170	-0.148
Monthly income (0= $\leq$ IDR 5,000,000, 1= > IDR 5,000,000)	0.047	0.156	0.161	0.180	0.171	0.045	0.084	0.106
Big family	-0.085	0.052	-0.084	-0.031	0.034	-0.080	-0.133	-0.063
Stress symptoms	1	-0.090	0.109	0.030	-0.388*	-0.457**	-0.563**	-
								0.500**
Problem focused coping		1	0.555**	0.835**	0.286	0.345*	0.249	0.317*
Emotion focused coping			1	0.921**	0.300	0.232	0.220	0.269
Total Coping Strategy				1	0.332*	0.315*	0.262	0.326*
Subjective (economic) well-being					1	0.781**	0.770**	0.911**
Subjective (social) well-being						1	0.868**	0.951**
Subjective (psychological) well- being							1	0.938**
Subjective well-being								1

Note: \*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed); \*\*significant at  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed); GS= Stress symptoms, PFC=Problem focused coping, EFC= Emotion focused coping, SK=Coping strategies, KSE=economic subjective well-being, KSS=social subjective well-being, KSP=psychological subjective well-being, KS=subjective well-being

### Regression Analysis

To identify the most influential predictors of subjective well-being, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. As shown in Table 6, the model yielded a statistically significant fit ( $F = 3.040$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) and explained 35.9 percent of the variance in subjective well-being (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.359$ ). Among the independent variables, only two emerged as significant predictors: stress symptoms ( $b = -0.546$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), which had a strong negative effect, and coping strategies ( $b = 0.714$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ), which had a positive impact. This highlights the critical role of internal psychological mechanisms in determining life satisfaction in long-distance marriage families.

Other family characteristics—including wife's age, child's age, duration of separation, intensity of meetings, education, occupation, income, and family size—did not significantly predict subjective well-being within this model. This suggests that while structural and demographic factors may contribute to the context, the immediate psychological resources of the individual play a more decisive role in shaping subjective experiences of well-being.

Taken together, these findings emphasize the centrality of emotional resilience and effective coping in mitigating the adverse effects of long-distance marriage. They also point to the need for targeted interventions, such as counseling and support networks, to strengthen coping capacities and reduce psychological vulnerability among wives managing family responsibilities in the absence of their partners.

Table 6 Regression coefficient values of family characteristics, stress symptoms, and coping strategies on subjective well-being

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient (b)	Standard error	Standardized coefficients beta (b)	p-value
constant	98.695	41.189		0.023
Family characteristics				
Wife's age	-0.476	0.589	-0.213	0.425
Child's age	0.159	0.552	0.075	0.776
Husband's age	0.859	0.657	0.225	0.202
Length of separation (0= $\leq$ 12 months. 1= >12 months)	4.897	5.089	0.146	0.344
Intensity of meetings (0= < 3 months. 1= $\geq$ 3 months)	0.762	5.811	0.021	0.897
Wife's length of education	-3.278	1.752	-0.287	0.071
Wife's occupation (0= housewife. 1= not in college)	-3.027	3.439	-0.124	0.386
Monthly income (0= $\leq$ IDR 5.000.000. 1= > IDR 5.000.0000)	0.614	4.790	0.021	0.899
Big family	-0.489	4.227	-0.020	0.909
Stress Symptoms	-0.546	0.164	-0.498	<b>0.002**</b>
Coping Strategy	0.714	0.260	0.384	<b>0.010**</b>
R <sup>2</sup>		0.536		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		<b>0.359</b>		
F		3.040		
p-value		<b>0.008*</b>		

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that both husbands and wives fall within the middle adulthood age range. According to Hurlock (1966), individuals in middle adulthood are typically capable of independently adjusting to life's demands and social expectations. At this stage, most individuals demonstrate emotional maturity and are able to resolve problems with greater stability. In the present study, the average age of the children was 16.63 years, placing them in the late adolescence category. Hurlock (1980) posits that adolescence is a critical and often turbulent stage, characterized by limited problem-solving experience, as most previous problems during childhood were resolved by parents. The developmental characteristics of adolescent children, combined with physical separation from the father in long-distance marriage families, present unique emotional and supervisory challenges for mothers.

This study also highlighted a wide variation in meeting intensity among couples, consistent with Gerstel and Gross (1982), who define long-distance marriage as involving separation for at least three nights a week for a minimum of three months. However, in the current study, some couples reported only meeting once every six months or even once per year. Purwanto et al. (2019) explain that such limited meeting intensity can lead to loneliness, lack of intimate communication, and decreased sexual intimacy, ultimately contributing to relationship strain. The majority of wives in the study had been in long-distance marriage arrangements for over a year, with several reporting the separation had started from the beginning of the marriage.

The data also show that most families fell into the small family category. As Yanti and Murtala (2019) note, smaller family sizes typically reduce household burdens, allowing for more efficient allocation of resources. Educational attainment in the sample was high, with both wives and husbands having completed university-level education, averaging 15.71 and 16.15 years, respectively. Education plays a pivotal role in determining employment and income levels, and these findings support Julianti and Utari's (2019) assertion that higher educational levels are positively associated with better economic outcomes. Consistent with this, the majority of respondents were employed in the private sector or government-owned enterprises. Rosidah et al. (2012) found that employed wives contribute significantly to household income, a trend reflected in this study, where over half of the families earned more than IDR 7,500,001 monthly.

The level of stress symptoms among respondents was predominantly mild, which may be attributed to their prolonged exposure and adaptation to the long-distance marriage context. Gross (in Rhodes, 2022) states



that couples who have been married for a longer period and whose children are already adults tend to experience less stress in such arrangements than newly married couples. Naibaho and Virilia (2016) support this by highlighting that the nature and dominance of marital problems vary depending on the stage and type of marriage. Furthermore, frequent communication and mutual trust can mitigate stress in long-distance relationships (Jiang & Hanrock, 2014). In this study, many wives reported trusting their husbands and acknowledged the necessity of the arrangement for economic reasons. Nevertheless, some wives admitted that physical absence of the husband was emotionally taxing, especially when adolescent children required closer supervision. Turner (2006) emphasized that the absence of one parent can elevate stress in parenting, which in turn may reduce maternal warmth and control. Cournoyer et al. (2005) assert that both parental warmth and discipline are essential for healthy child development, and stress may compromise these elements. Hastuti et al. (2008) further explain that mothers experiencing high stress levels are less likely to provide optimal care, particularly in families with adolescent children.

Coping strategies among respondents were predominantly at a moderate level, aligning with findings by Hanifah (2021), who observed similar patterns in long-distance marriage families. Coping responses differ depending on the nature of stressors and the available resources (Maryam in Nurilla, 2013). Lyon (2000) defines coping as a process involving regulation, avoidance, tolerance, or adaptation to stress. In this study, most wives demonstrated stronger reliance on problem-focused coping than emotion-focused coping. Given the high educational and employment status among respondents, it is plausible that these women possessed sufficient cognitive and material resources to resolve problems actively. Choi et al. (2017) observed that individuals in long-distance marriages often prefer rational and proactive coping strategies. Lazarus (1993) explains that problem-focused coping is generally adopted when individuals believe they can alter the circumstances causing stress. Moreover, Jiang and Hanrock (2013) found that long-distance couples using problem-focused coping strategies reported higher marital satisfaction than those relying solely on emotion-focused methods, which are typically employed when the stressor is perceived as uncontrollable.

Subjective well-being, as conceptualized by Sunarti (2018), includes economic, social, and psychological satisfaction. The present study revealed that overall subjective well-being among wives was high. Emotional self-regulation, openness between spouses, and effective conflict resolution, even in the absence of cohabitation, contributed significantly to this result (Kurniady et al., 2023). On the economic front, the dual-income nature of most families likely enhanced financial satisfaction. Psychologically, the majority of wives felt secure and emotionally stable, which was reflected in the absence of low psychological well-being scores. Socially, despite the physical distance, respondents reported contentment in their familial relationships. According to structural-functional theory, individuals often engage in cognitive compensation, accepting and adapting to stress in ways that preserve family balance and harmony (Sunarti & Puspitawati, 2009). As Nayana (2013) articulates, individuals with high psychological well-being experience greater emotional fulfillment and cognitive satisfaction.

The correlation analyses further deepen our understanding of these dynamics. A significant positive correlation between husband's age and coping strategies suggests that older partners may bring life experience that enhances emotional regulation and adaptive behavior. Beier et al. (2023) reported that older adults typically employ more constructive coping, such as seeking emotional support, and achieve higher levels of personal fulfillment.

Similarly, the age of children was positively associated with subjective well-being. This supports Diener et al. (2005), who assert that as individuals age, they become more focused on self-acceptance, achievements, and family responsibilities, thereby enhancing their subjective well-being. Additionally, lower meeting intensity was correlated with heightened stress symptoms. This is consistent with Winta and Nugraheni (2019), who found that prolonged separation creates emotional fatigue and potential disconnection. The lack of physical closeness may also lead to suspicion or jealousy, further exacerbating stress (Prameswara & Sakti, 2016).

Interestingly, meeting intensity was also positively correlated with coping strategies. Bukowski and Falconier (2010) explain that frequent face-to-face interaction strengthens attachment and facilitates more effective stress management. Emotionally engaged partners tend to express themselves more openly, thus fostering joint problem-solving and mutual support.

The inverse relationship between stress symptoms and subjective well-being was pronounced in this study. This echoes findings by Manita et al. (2019) and Herawati and Rizkillah (2022), who concluded that elevated stress levels reduce overall life satisfaction. The results also affirm that problem-focused coping is positively associated with subjective well-being. Rachma and Widyastuti (2024) found that these strategies help reduce negative emotions and promote resilience. Romaria (in Rachma & Widyastuti, 2024) emphasized that individuals who actively engage in rational problem-solving experience greater emotional balance and well-

being.

Moreover, general coping strategies also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with subjective well-being, as shown in the work of Gori et al. (2020). Effective coping enhances an individual's sense of agency, which strengthens their confidence in managing life challenges and contributes to greater happiness.

Lastly, the regression analysis provides compelling evidence of the dual influence of psychological variables. Stress symptoms negatively influenced subjective well-being ( $b = -0.546$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), while coping strategies exerted a positive influence ( $b = 0.714$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). Herawati and Rizkillah (2022) similarly found that high stress undermines satisfaction, whereas effective coping boosts it. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argued that stress disrupts emotional, physical, and social functioning, all of which are key determinants of life satisfaction. Furthermore, Faqih (2019) confirmed that high coping capacity fosters emotional stability, enabling individuals to maintain happiness and well-being despite adversities.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study reinforces existing theoretical frameworks that connect coping mechanisms with psychological well-being, particularly in unique marital contexts such as long-distance arrangements. The results provide empirical support for Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory, illustrating how problem-focused coping strategies can mediate the impact of stressors on individual well-being. It also adds to the discourse in developmental and family psychology by highlighting the role of age, family structure, and interaction frequency as contextual variables in psychological resilience.

### **Managerial Implications**

From a managerial or programmatic perspective, the findings suggest the importance of designing support systems for women involved in long-distance marriages. Institutions such as family counseling centers, women's empowerment organizations, and mental health services could provide tailored interventions to strengthen problem-solving skills, communication techniques, and parenting strategies. Employers of individuals in long-distance arrangements may also consider flexible policies that support periodic reunification and psychosocial support to enhance employee well-being and performance.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to a single urban setting, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. The use of self-reported measures may also introduce biases related to social desirability or recall. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to examine changes in stress, coping, and well-being over time, as well as include comparative samples from different regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, or cultural contexts. Including the perspectives of husbands or children could also provide a more comprehensive view of the dynamics within long-distance marriages.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study concludes that families involved in long-distance marriage (LDM) arrangements are generally composed of individuals in the middle adulthood age range for both parents, while their children fall into the late adolescent category. The most frequent intensity of spousal meetings was once every two weeks, with an average separation duration of 11.37 years. Parents' educational backgrounds were equivalent to university-level qualifications, and their employment status was predominantly within private or state-owned enterprises. The majority of families reported a household income exceeding IDR 7,500,001 and were categorized as small-sized families.

The psychological profile of the respondents revealed mild stress symptoms, moderate use of coping strategies, and high levels of subjective well-being. Correlation analysis demonstrated that the husband's age had a significant positive relationship with coping strategies, while the child's age was significantly associated with economic, psychological, and overall subjective well-being. The intensity of meetings was positively associated with both stress symptoms and coping strategies. Notably, stress symptoms exhibited a significant negative relationship with subjective well-being across social, psychological, and overall domains.

Further, the analysis identified a significant positive association between problem-focused coping strategies and subjective well-being in social and overall dimensions. Broader coping strategies also showed significant positive associations with subjective well-being in economic, social, and overall aspects. The regression model confirmed that stress symptoms had a significant negative effect, whereas coping strategies had a significant positive effect on subjective well-being. These findings reinforce the importance of psychological

resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms in enhancing the well-being of individuals in long-distance marriage contexts.

Future research is encouraged to adopt qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to capture more nuanced emotional dynamics and familial experiences within LDM arrangements. Including adolescent children as direct subjects of study could provide valuable insights, particularly regarding emotional attachment and perceived parental support. Moreover, families engaged in long-distance marriage should be encouraged to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate stress and enhance family functioning—such as scheduling quality time, engaging in community-based support networks, and maintaining consistent, empathetic communication with spouses and children.

From a policy and practice perspective, these findings underscore the urgent need for the government and institutions to provide targeted family counseling services and develop family-friendly policies regarding work placements for married individuals. Organizational support in the form of flexible scheduling, digital communication facilitation, and psychosocial services will be critical to help LDM families sustain emotional bonds and resilience despite geographic separation. These combined efforts can contribute to stronger family cohesion, psychological well-being, and optimal functioning in both domestic and professional spheres.

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