

The Influence of Social Support and Family Interaction on Marital Quality in Middle-Aged Families

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Abstract: Middle-aged families represent a transitional stage in which the youngest child leaves the parental home and couples begin to enter retirement age. This stage often gives rise to emotional challenges, such as empty nest syndrome, which may affect marital quality. This study aimed to analyze the influence of social support and family interaction on marital quality among middle-aged families. A cross-sectional design was employed, involving 32 wives as respondents who were still living with their husbands while all children had already lived separately. The study was conducted in Gunung Batu Subdistrict, West Bogor District. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The findings show that social support and family interaction were generally at moderate levels. Support from the nuclear family was high, whereas support from extended family and neighbors was low. Marital quality was mostly low, particularly in the happiness dimension, although satisfaction tended to be higher. Regression analysis showed that husband–wife interaction had a significant positive effect on marital quality, whereas parent–child interaction had a significant negative effect. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening family interactions to support marital quality in middle-aged families.

Keywords: family interaction, marital quality, middle-aged family, social support

1. INTRODUCTION

Family is defined as two or more individuals who are united through blood relations, marriage, or adoption, live within the same household, interact with one another, and, through their respective roles, create and maintain culture (Friedman, 2010). The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia No. 52 of 2009 defines the family as the smallest unit of society, consisting of a husband and wife, a husband and wife with children, a father and his children, or a mother and her children. As time progresses, families develop through various stages, including the stage of a married couple without children, the birth of the first child, families with preschool-aged children, families with school-aged children, families with adolescents, families with adult children, middle-aged families, and elderly families (Duvall & Miller, as cited in Andarmoyo, 2012).

The middle-aged family stage, also referred to as the *middle-age family* or *midlife marriage*, represents the seventh stage in the family life cycle. This stage begins when the youngest child leaves home and ends with retirement or the death of one spouse (Duvall, 1997). The developmental tasks of families at this stage include maintaining health, providing a health-promoting environment, sustaining meaningful relationships, and strengthening marital bonds (Friedman, 2010). Changes in parental roles when children begin to leave home can present challenges for parents (Hurlock, 1980). Emotionally, the reaction experienced by parents when children leave home is known as *empty nest syndrome* (Singh & Dubey, 2017). Parents at this stage are particularly vulnerable to experiencing empty nest syndrome, as the transition of children leaving home represents a new phase in midlife marriage (Handriani et al., 2020).

Empty nest syndrome, often referred to as the “empty nest phase,” occurs when children no longer live with their parents, resulting in feelings of loss and loneliness (Hurlock, 2002). Feelings of loss and anxiety due to children leaving home

may affect the marital relationship, particularly for mothers who are typically more involved in childrearing processes (Mitchell & Lovergreen, 2009). Research conducted by Theiss and Nagy (2013) found that married couples whose children have decided to pursue higher education, employment, or marriage tend to experience lower marital satisfaction and higher levels of empty nest syndrome due to the loss of their parental role and increased feelings of loneliness.

According to Sunarti et al. (2005), satisfaction and happiness are dimensions of marital quality. Marital quality is defined as an individual's evaluation of their relationship with their spouse (Fincham & Rogge, 2010). These dimensions assess marital life across various aspects, including commitment, trust, marital values, communication, family togetherness, equality, relationships with extended family, expression of affection, love and sexuality, similarity of interests, as well as family economic conditions and income (Sunarti et al., 2005). Marital quality contributes to happiness and well-being among spouses, thereby maintaining marital harmony (Herawati et al., 2018). Duvall and Miller (1985) stated that marital quality is subjective for each spouse; for husbands, it may reflect feelings of appreciation, loyalty, and shared expectations for the future of the relationship, whereas for wives, it may reflect emotional security, effective communication, and the development of closeness.

High marital quality is also associated with lower levels of depression (Williams, 2003) and improved health outcomes (Umberson et al., 2006). Bulanda et al. (2016) reported that marital quality improves when couples receive positive social support, as such support reduces stressors. Conversely, decreased social support from one's spouse and increased stress may lead to marital conflict (Dehle et al., 2001).

Social support plays a crucial role in marital life and is particularly beneficial for families in the middle-aged family phase, as it provides a sense of calm, self-confidence, and feeling cared for (Yazdani et al., 2016). Social support is defined as feelings of comfort, attention, and assistance received by individuals from others (Sarafino, 1996). Gunuc and Dogan (2013) described social support as a basic human need that includes love, appreciation, self-actualization, and a sense of belonging through interaction with others.

Sunarti et al. (2005) emphasized that satisfaction and happiness are core dimensions of marital quality. Marital quality reflects individuals' evaluations of their relationship with their spouse (Fincham & Rogge, 2010). These dimensions encompass various aspects of marital life, including commitment, trust, marital values, communication, family togetherness, equality, relationships with extended family, affection expression, love and sexuality, similarity of interests, and economic conditions (Sunarti et al., 2005). Puspitawati (2017) stated that marital quality reflects the extent to which couples are able to maintain harmony, happiness, and well-being within the household. Marital quality consists of two main dimensions: marital satisfaction and marital happiness. Marital satisfaction is more rational and relates to evaluations of various household aspects, such as economic conditions, communication, and role distribution, whereas marital happiness is associated with emotional experiences within the relationship (Conger et al., 1994).

Good marital quality enhances happiness and improves the well-being of spouses, thereby maintaining marital harmony (Herawati et al., 2018). Duvall and Miller (1985) emphasized the subjective nature of marital quality for each partner. For husbands, marital quality may be reflected in feelings of appreciation, loyalty, and shared expectations for the future, whereas for wives, it is associated with emotional security, effective communication, and emotional closeness. Previous studies indicate that couples with high marital quality tend to exhibit greater psychological resilience, more adaptive coping strategies for household stress, and stronger commitment to the relationship (Huston et al., 2001). Glenn (1990) highlighted that marital quality directly contributes to family stability, emotional well-being, and physical health.

Furthermore, marital quality affects both mental and physical health, as couples with higher marital quality tend to experience lower levels of depression and better physical health conditions (Williams, 2003; Umberson et al., 2005). Conversely, marital disharmony increases the risk of psychological distress and prolonged conflict (Glenn, 1990).

Family interaction is a critical aspect that supports the continuity of daily family activities (Rizkillah et al., 2021). According to Herawati et al. (2018), marital satisfaction is influenced by interactions among family members. Family interaction consists of reciprocal relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and among siblings (Chuang, 2005). Duvall (1985) noted that family interactions may be either harmonious or non-harmonious. Positive interactions are characterized by open communication, balanced role-sharing in decision-making, and healthy coordination between emotions and behaviors (Herawati et al., 2018). Sunarti (2018) stated that harmonious spousal interaction not only promotes happiness and satisfaction but also provides positive role models for children. Conversely, non-harmonious interactions may trigger disharmony in other family relationships (Martinea & Sunarti, 2019).

High levels of family interaction are positively associated with marital satisfaction, financial management, and spouses' subjective well-being (Sunarti et al., 2020). Increased family interaction also enhances social support, indicating that well-established interactions strengthen social support received by families and subsequently influence spousal relationships (Herawati et al., 2018). This finding aligns with McHale et al. (2012), who reported that sibling interactions tend to be poorer when parental relationships are also strained. Non-harmonious spousal interaction is associated with lower levels of marital happiness and satisfaction. A non-harmonious family environment may result from low levels of family interaction or weakened emotional bonds (Wheatley, 2014).

Based on the above discussion, further in-depth research is required to examine the effects of social support and family interaction on marital quality among middle-aged families. This study aims to investigate how social support and family interaction influence marital quality in middle-aged families. While numerous studies have examined marital quality, explicit investigations focusing on social support and family interaction as influencing factors in middle-aged families or midlife marriages remain limited. Empirically, this study contributes to a broader understanding that social support and family interaction are interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and jointly contribute to marital quality.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative method with a cross-sectional study design, which is an observational research approach that analyzes data from variables collected at a single point in time within a predetermined sample population. The research location was selected purposively, namely Gunung Batu Subdistrict, West Bogor District. West Bogor District was chosen because it has the largest population in Bogor City, totaling 239,982 residents, or 22.41% of the city's total population (BPS Kota Bogor, 2024). Among the 16 subdistricts in West Bogor District, Gunung Batu Subdistrict has the highest concentration of residents in the middle-aged family stage (45–59 years), with a population of 5,622 individuals (BPS Kecamatan Bogor Barat, 2024). This makes Gunung Batu a strategic location for examining the influence of social support and family interaction on marital quality among middle-aged families. The

research period included preparation, data collection, data processing, data analysis, and report writing, which were conducted from February 2025 to June 2025.

2.2 Sampling

The population of this study consisted of middle-aged families. The sample was selected using a non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique, resulting in a total of 32 intact families (husband and wife) who lived in the same household and whose children had all established separate residences from their parents. The respondents in this study were wives, based on the consideration that wives are generally more emotionally involved in family relationship dynamics and tend to be more sensitive to changes in marital quality, particularly during the transitional period when children no longer reside with their parents. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire.

2.3 Measurement

1. Family characteristics included the age of husbands and wives, education level, occupation, number of children, family size, and length of marriage. Data on family characteristics were collected using a questionnaire and measured on ratio, nominal, and interval scales, depending on the type of variable. The age of husbands and wives was categorized based on Hurlock's (1980) age classification, while family size was categorized according to the classification proposed by BKKBN (2005). Length of marriage was divided into four categories based on year ranges. Educational attainment was grouped according to formal education levels, and family income was categorized based on monthly income intervals. The number of children was recorded numerically and subsequently classified according to family size.
2. Social support was assessed from three sources: the nuclear family, extended family, and neighbors. This variable was measured using *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* developed by Zimet et al. (1988). The questionnaire demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.710.
3. Family interaction encompassed spousal interaction and parent-child interaction. This variable was measured using an instrument developed by Chuang (2005). The questionnaire showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.778.
4. Marital quality included marital happiness and marital satisfaction. This variable was measured using a modified instrument originally developed by Conger et al. (1990) and later adopted by Sunarti et al. (2005). The questionnaire demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.774.

Table 1. Operational Definitions and Measurement Indicators of Variables

Variable	Definisi Operasional	Indikator
Social Support <i>The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support</i> <i>developed by Zimet et al. (1988)</i>	Individuals' perceptions of the availability of care, appreciation, affection, and tangible assistance provided by their closest social environment.	[1] Never [2] Rarely [3] Often [4] Always
Family Interaction (Chuang 2005)	Reciprocal relationships among family members, such as husband–wife and parent–child interactions, in which members mutually influence one another.	[1] Never [2] Rarely [3] Often [4] Always
Marital Quality Adapted from Sunarti et al. (2005), developed from Conger et al. (1990)	Subjective feelings based on the level of satisfaction and happiness experienced within marriage.	[1] Never [2] Rarely [3] Often [4] Always

2.4 Data Collection

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews using structured and relevant questionnaires. The primary data obtained through the questionnaires included family characteristics, perceived social support, intra-family interactions, and marital quality. Secondary data were obtained from various publications, including books, official documents, academic journals, and other relevant source

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were processed through several stages, including editing, data cleaning, coding, data entry, scoring, and data analysis. Data processing was conducted using Microsoft Office Excel, while data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for Windows. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed.

1. Descriptive analysis was used to identify family characteristics, social support, family interaction, and marital quality among middle-aged families. Descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values.
2. Inferential analysis was conducted to address the second and third research objectives, namely to examine the relationships and effects of family characteristics, social support, and family interaction on marital quality. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to determine both the simultaneous and partial effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable

3. RESULTS

3.1 Family Characteristics

Based on the study findings, the average age of husbands was 61.56 years, with an age range of 48–77 years, while the average age of wives was 56.03 years, ranging from 42 to 67 years. These ages fall within the middle adulthood to older adulthood stages according to Hurlock's classification (1980). The average educational

attainment of both husbands and wives was senior high school or its equivalent (12 years of schooling), with minimum and maximum values ranging from 6 to 16 years. One-quarter of the husbands (25%) were unemployed, while approximately one-fifth (18.8%) worked as laborers and entrepreneurs. About one-eighth (12.5%) were retirees and private-sector employees, and only a small proportion (3.1%) were civil servants.

More than half of the wives (68.8%) were homemakers. In terms of family size, over half of the sample families (65.6%) were classified as small families (2–4 members). The average monthly per capita income of the sample families was above the Bogor City poverty line, amounting to IDR 699,861 (BPS, 2024), with an income range from IDR 150,000 to IDR 5,000,000 per month. Nevertheless, 12 families (37.5%) had incomes below the poverty line. The average length of marriage among the sample families was 32.97 years, with a range of 22–52 years.

3.2 Social Support

Social support refers to the involvement and attention received by respondents from family members, friends, neighbors, or institutions that help fulfill emotional, physical, material, or informational needs. Table 2 shows that the overall mean social support index was 72.61, which falls into the moderate category (50%). The nuclear family support dimension was categorized as high (59%), with the highest-scoring indicator related to children's efforts to understand the family's situation when problems arise (96.09%).

In contrast, the extended family support dimension was categorized as low (44%), with the highest indicator reflecting extended family members' efforts to express affection and concern (80.46%). Similarly, support from neighbors was also categorized as low, with the largest proportion of respondents (63%). The highest-scoring indicator in this dimension was related to feelings of calmness and comfort in the current residential environment (95.31%).

Table 2. Distribution of the Sample by Index Categories, Minimum and Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Social Support

Deviation of Social Support								
Social Support	Category						Min-Max	Mean \pm SD
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Nuclear Family Support	2	6.3	11	34	19	59	50,00 - 90,00	78,12 \pm 10,98
Extended Family Support	14	44	11	34	7	22	16,67 - 100,00	63,28 \pm 25,56
Neighbor Support	20	63	3	9.4	9	28	25,00 - 100,00	60,67 \pm 21,08
Social Support	6	18.8	16	50.0	10	31.3	47,62 - 100,00	72,61 \pm 12,84

Note: *n* = number; % = percentage; SD = standard deviation

3.3 Family Interaction

Interaksi amily interaction refers to relationships among family members—namely between mothers and fathers, mothers and children, fathers and children, and among children—that mutually influence one another and create reciprocal interactions. Table 3 shows that the overall mean family interaction index was 70.74, indicating a moderate level of family interaction (53.1%). The spousal interaction dimension was also categorized as moderate (47%), with the highest-scoring indicator related to making time to interact with one's spouse (83.59%). Parent–child interaction was likewise classified as moderate (47%), with the highest-scoring indicators related to mutual expressions of affection and reminding children.

Table 3. Distribution of the Sample by Family Interaction Index Categories, Minimum–Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation

Family Interaction	Category						Min-Max	Mean ± SD
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Husband-Wife Interaction	8	25	15	47	9	28	36,11 - 90,28	68,79 ± 14,19
Parents-Child Interaction	7	22	15	47	10	31	42,42 - 93,94	72,86 ± 13,71
Family Interaction	8	25.0	17	53.1	7	21.9	39,13 - 91,30	70,74 - 13,10

3.4 Marital Quality

Marital quality refers to subjective feelings based on the level of happiness and satisfaction experienced by respondents' families when considering all aspects of marriage. Table 4 shows that the overall marital quality index had a mean score of 52.23, with the largest proportion of respondents classified in the low category (96.9%). The marital satisfaction dimension was categorized as high (44%), with the highest-scoring indicator related to satisfaction in spending leisure time with one's spouse (85.15%). In contrast, marital happiness was classified as low (97%), with the highest-scoring indicator related to marital commitment (85.93%).

Table 4. Distribution of the Sample by Index Categories, Minimum–Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation

Marital Quality	Category						Min-Max Low	Mean ± SD Moderate
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Marital Satisfaction	11	34	7	22	14	44	23,33 - 95,00	70,88 ± 18,53
Marutal Happines	31	97	1	3.1	0	0	11,67 - 68,33	33,59 ± 13,36
Marital Quality	31	96.9	1	3.1	0	0	40,83 - 61,67	52,23 - 5,29

3.5 Relationships between Family Characteristics and Social Support, Family Interaction, and Marital Quality

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis presented in Table 5 indicate that family size has a significant negative relationship with family interaction ($r = -0.380$, $p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that as the number of family members increases, the level of interaction among family members tends to decrease.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficients between Family Characteristics, Social Support, Family Interaction, and Marital Quality

Variable	Social Support	Family Interaction	Marital Quality
Family Characteristics			
Husband's age (years)	-0.037	-0.030	-0.223
Wife's age (years)	0.050	0.210	-0.161
Husband's education (years)	-0.180	0.023	0.258
Wife's education (years)	-0.024	0.200	0.299
Per capita income (IDR)	-0.284	0.288	0.121
Number of children (person)	0.056	-0.201	-0.241
Family size (persons)	-0.096	-.380*	0.135
Length of marriage (years)	0.039	0.070	-0.237

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed); *Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

The correlation results presented in Table 6 indicate significant relationships among several variable dimensions. Support from the nuclear family showed a significant positive correlation with both spousal interaction, parent–child interaction, and marital satisfaction. Conversely, support from the nuclear family was significantly negatively correlated with marital happiness. Both family interaction dimensions—spousal interaction and parent–child interaction—exhibited similar patterns, showing significant positive correlations with marital satisfaction but significant negative correlations with marital happiness.

Table 6. Correlation Coefficients among Variable Dimensions

Variabel	NFS	SS EFS	NS	FI SI	PC	MS	MQ MH
SS							
NFS		0.202	0.159	.599**	.604**	.582**	-.592**
EFS	0.202		0.256	0.106	0.141	0.113	-0.096
NS	0.159	0.256		-0.058	-0.008	-0.179	0.257
FI							
SI	.599**	0.106	-0.058		.759**	.741**	-.731**
PC	.604**	0.141	-0.008	.759**		.515**	-.651**

Note: Asterisks indicate significance levels: $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed), $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Abbreviations used in the table are as follows: SS = Social Support, NFS = Nuclear Family Support, EFS = Extended Family Support, NS = Neighbor Support, FI = Family Interaction, SI = Spousal Interaction, PC = Parent–Child Interaction, MQ = Marital Quality, MS = Marital Satisfaction, and MH = Marital Happiness.

3.6 The Influence of Family Characteristics, Social Support, and Family Interaction on Marital Quality

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis presented in Table 7 indicate that the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) was 0.205, meaning that the model explains 20.5% of the variance in marital quality, while the remaining 79.5% is influenced by other factors outside the variables studied. The predictor variables included in the model comprised components of social support, family interaction, as well as family characteristics, specifically wife's age and per capita income. The selection of family characteristics was based on the best model selection considering multicollinearity and model stability, as tested through various schemes by the researchers.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients of Family Characteristics, Social Support, Family Interaction, and Marital Quality

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients (β)	Sig.
	β	Std. Error		
Wife's Age (years)	-0.068	0.140	-0.083	0.633
Per Capita Income (IDR)	-5.915E-07	0.000	-0.132	0.489
Nuclear Family Support (category)	3.241	1.650	0.380	0.061
Extended Family Support (category)	0.164	1.136	0.024	0.887
Neighbor Support (category)	-1.011	0.991	-0.172	0.318
Spousal Interaction (category)	3.784	1.628	0.528	0.029
Parent–Child Interaction (category)	-3.666	1.610	-0.508	0.032
Adj, R2			0.205	
F			2.145	
Sig.			.077b	

The regression results indicate that spousal interaction has a significant positive effect on marital quality ($\beta = 0.528$, $p = 0.029$), meaning that a one-unit increase in the spousal interaction dimension is associated with a 0.528-point increase in marital quality. Meanwhile, parent–child interaction exhibits a significant negative effect on marital quality ($\beta = -0.508$, $p = 0.032$), suggesting that an increase in parent–child interaction tends to decrease marital quality.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, the average age of husbands was 61.56 years, categorized as middle-aged to elderly adults (Hurlock, 1980), ranging from 48 to 77 years. The average age of wives was 56.03 years, falling within the middle-aged category, with a range of 42 to 67 years. Entering old age, individuals experience physiological changes that gradually reduce their working capacity. Families must adapt through various survival strategies due to the inability to continue working, not merely because of administrative retirement (Tiara, 2013). Among the sample families in this study, one-quarter of husbands were unemployed, while about one in five worked as laborers and entrepreneurs, one in eight as retirees or private employees, and only a small fraction were civil servants. More than half of the wives were housewives. The average education level of both husbands and wives was 12 years, equivalent to secondary education (high school or equivalent). Education is an important factor influencing job quality and income. According to Julianto and Utari (2013), higher education levels increase individuals' chances of obtaining better-paying jobs. Approximately 90.6% of the sample families had per capita monthly income above the Bogor City poverty line of IDR 699,861 (BPS, 2024), with incomes ranging from IDR 150,000 to IDR 5,000,000. However, 37.5% (12 out of 32 families) earned below the poverty line. The majority of families consisted of 2-4 members, classified as small families (BKKBN, 2005).

About 43.8% of families had been married for 22 to 30 years, 34.4% for 31 to 40 years, and 21.9% for 41 to 52 years, indicating most families were in the long-term marriage stage. Couples in long-term marriages must continuously adapt to various life phases, from early marriage to the empty nest period (Mackey & O'Brien, 1999). The success of long-married couples depends on their ability to adjust to situational changes and roles, including major life cycle transitions such as entering old age (Mackey & O'Brien, 1995).

Overall, social support was moderate, with support from the nuclear family rated high. Social support received by individuals helps them cope with challenges (Herawati et al., 2012). In line with Gunuc and Dogan (2013), social support is a basic human need for maintaining social relationships, overcoming loneliness, adapting to peers, and sustaining psychological stability. Support from the extended family was low in this study. Extended families may not fully appreciate the importance of providing emotional or practical support, resulting in low or irrelevant support despite physical proximity (Jati & Anggraeni, 2020). Neighbor support was the lowest among social support dimensions. Families tend to rely on nuclear family members to share problems rather than neighbors (Herawati & Rizkillah, 2022).

Family interaction overall was moderate, with both spousal and parent–child interactions rated moderate. The moderate level of spousal interaction suggests that while some couples maintain good communication and mutual support, others show limitations in daily interactions. Spousal interaction is crucial for maintaining family function balance, especially in role and responsibility sharing (Puspitawati, 2013). Consistent with Sholikha et al. (2019), parents maintain close relationships with adult children due to ongoing emotional needs, particularly in families with strong kinship culture or high relational orientation.

Marital quality overall was low, with only 3.1% of families in the moderate category. This indicates that couples in the sample have yet to achieve optimal marital quality encompassing satisfaction and happiness in married life. Consistent with Lewis and Spanier (1979), low marital quality results in feelings of instability. Specifically, marital satisfaction was high. According to Lavner et al. (2014), marital satisfaction is grounded in love expressed over time. This aligns with Meliani et al. (2014), who found that longer marriage duration positively affects marital satisfaction, meaning the longer the marriage, the higher the satisfaction. Conversely, marital happiness was low; nearly all families were in the low category, with only one family in the moderate category and none in the high category. Marital happiness is achieved through communication and openness between spouses and in-laws, sustaining marital commitment (Tyas & Herawati, 2017). The low average marital happiness suggests that despite satisfaction with roles and functions within the household, couples may not experience emotional and psychological happiness. This aligns with Sooki (2021), who found that couples can feel generally satisfied but still face factors reducing marital happiness, such as economic pressure, work, or stressful life events.

Correlation tests between marital quality and all variables showed a significant negative relationship between family size and family interaction, meaning larger family size tends to reduce family interaction. This is consistent with Rizkillah et al. (2015), who found family size negatively affected parenting environment quality, which relates to marital satisfaction and happiness. Anderson et al. (2018) further noted that larger family size reduces family conversation orientation, implying open, warm, and deep family interactions decrease as family members increase.

Correlation analysis among variable dimensions showed nuclear family support had significant positive relationships with all family interaction aspects and marital satisfaction but a significant negative relationship with marital happiness. This means that while couples feel supported and structurally connected, they may not experience emotional happiness, especially in middle-aged families. Both spousal and parent–child interactions correlated positively and significantly with marital satisfaction but negatively with marital happiness. Wijaya et al. (2020) suggested that even with functional relationships and satisfaction, emotional happiness may be lacking. Wardani (2016) emphasized that family interaction may remain functional while middle-aged couples feel empty and unhappy due to relations driven by social responsibility and obligation rather than emotional intimacy.

Multiple linear regression results showed spousal interaction significantly influenced marital quality. The better the spousal interaction, the higher the marital

quality perceived by middle-aged couples. Waldinger and Schulz (2006) described spousal interaction as a relationship involving feelings and emotional control, where higher interaction improves marital quality. Sunarti (2013) similarly found that infrequent spousal interaction adversely affects marriage, potentially leading to unhappiness or divorce. Puspitawati and Setioningsih (2011) noted low spousal interaction causes problems, ultimately reducing marital quality.

In contrast, parent–child interaction showed a significant negative effect on marital quality, indicating that increased interaction with children may lower marital quality for middle-aged couples. In many cultures, parents feel responsible for guiding adult children even after their marriage, maintaining involvement in children's decisions (Raharja et al., 2020). Such interaction remains high when children live nearby. Ismaniar and Utoyo (2020) reported increased interaction due to adult children depending on parental practical support, such as childcare or finances. Tyas and Herawati (2017) noted economic family issues raise conflicts that must be managed. Parents, especially mothers, not only provide financial help but also take on the primary caregiver role for grandchildren. This intensifies parent–child interaction frequency, although quality varies (Sholikha et al., 2019).

Questionnaire data from this study suggest the negative tendency in parent–child interaction relates to unhealthy communication patterns, ultimately impacting marital quality negatively. Parental behaviors such as raising their voice when upset or making demands without polite delivery reflect aggressive, dominant communication. Studies show harsh or unempathic verbal communication increases household emotional tension and reduces marital satisfaction (Kwon & Kim, 2008). When parent communication is marked by raised tones, pressure, or unilateral demands, relationships tend to be vertical and lack emotional attachment.

Additionally, parents retaliating against children's mistakes, avoiding children during conflicts, or harboring hostility indicate passive-aggressive conflict patterns damaging family dynamics. Karahan (2007) found passive conflicts—silence, withdrawal, or avoidance—increase emotional exhaustion between partners and create marital distance. The questionnaire also revealed parents reluctant to express disagreement, preferring silence or yielding, a passive communication pattern. Such styles lead to unresolved conflict accumulation and reduced long-term relationship quality due to feelings of being undervalued and dishonest (Karahan, 2007).

In middle-aged families, such relational conflicts disrupt emotional focus on communication and intimacy as emotional energy is diverted to parent–child conflicts. Questionnaire indicators show parent–child interaction lacks mutual support or emotional bonding, tending instead toward suppressive, avoidant, or confrontational communication. This tension acts as a new stressor, disrupting parental emotional stability and negatively affecting the spousal relationship. Thus, it is unsurprising that parent–child interaction negatively impacts marital quality, as this relationship adds psychological burdens undermining couple harmony. Herawati et al. (2018) also emphasized that family interaction tensions reduce emotional comfort, worsen couple communication, and ultimately lower marital quality.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The respondents in this study consisted of 32 wives from middle-aged families residing in Gunung Batu Subdistrict, West Bogor District. The average age of the husbands was 61.56 years, ranging from 48 to 77 years, while the average age of the wives was 56.03 years, ranging from 42 to 67 years. The average education level of both husbands and wives was 12 years (equivalent to senior high school). One-quarter of the husbands were unemployed, approximately one-fifth worked as laborers and entrepreneurs, about one-eighth were retirees and private employees, and only a small proportion were civil servants. More than half of the wives were housewives. Over half

of the sampled families were classified as small families with 2 to 4 members. The average per capita monthly income of the sampled families was above the Bogor City poverty line, amounting to IDR 699,861, with income ranging from IDR 150,000 to IDR 5,000,000 per month. Nevertheless, 37.5% of families had incomes below the poverty line. The average duration of marriage among the sampled families was 32.97 years, ranging from 22 to 52 years.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that family size had a significant negative relationship with family interaction. Support from the nuclear family was positively and significantly correlated with husband-wife interaction, parent-child interaction, and marital satisfaction. However, nuclear family support showed a significant negative correlation with marital happiness. This suggests that involvement from the nuclear family can enhance communication functions and roles within the family, but it does not necessarily correspond with emotional happiness. Both husband-wife interaction and parent-child interaction were positively and significantly associated with marital satisfaction. However, both interactions also showed significant negative relationships with marital happiness. In other words, although couples may feel satisfied with their roles and relationship structure, they do not necessarily experience emotional happiness.

Multiple linear regression analysis indicated that husband-wife interaction had a positive and significant effect on marital quality. This means that better quality communication and involvement between spouses lead to a higher perceived quality of the marital relationship. Conversely, parent-child interaction had a significant negative effect on marital quality. This indicates that overly intense but unhealthy parent-child relationships may become a source of emotional stress within the household, negatively impacting the harmony between spouses in middle-aged families.

Based on the findings, the quality of marriage in middle-aged families was considered low, particularly in terms of happiness. Therefore, middle-aged couples are recommended to improve the quality of husband-wife interaction through open, empathetic, and supportive communication in daily activities. This is important since husband-wife interaction was found to have a significant positive effect on marital quality. Parent-child interaction in this study was moderate but showed a significant negative impact on marital quality. Hence, it is essential for couples to manage parent-child interactions healthily to avoid disrupting the balance of the husband-wife relationship. This management can be done by fostering reciprocal communication and establishing clear role boundaries among family members. Social support from the nuclear family was categorized as high and positively associated with interaction and marital satisfaction. Therefore, support from the nuclear family should be maintained and strengthened. Meanwhile, support from the extended family and neighbors was relatively low, suggesting that families are encouraged to expand their social networks through active participation in social, religious, and community activities to create a stronger external support system. Future research is recommended to involve husbands and children as respondents to obtain a more comprehensive perspective on family dynamics in middle-aged families. Additionally, expanding the geographic scope and sample size, as well as employing probability sampling techniques, would enhance the representativeness and generalizability of the results. Researchers are also advised to consider technical aspects of fieldwork implementation, such as the length of instruments used and environmental conditions during data collection, to maintain response quality and respondent comfort.

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