

MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND INFLUENCING FACTORS (Studies on Married Women in Makassar)

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Abstract

Despite the fact that conflict is an undeniable part in marriage life, yet it could be a serious threat for it. In addition, it may bring negative impact for an individual life, both personal and social life, particularly for the children involved in the marital conflict. This study aimed to determine the factors which influence marital conflict resolution. This study involved 107 married women as the respondents with specific age of 10-40 years old. The source of data was the questionnaire in the form of open-ended questions. It was classified based on the similarity of answer. The result showed that there were two primary factor groups which were evidenced to influence marital conflict resolution, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors consisted of emotion regulation, attachment, and trait. Meanwhile the external factors were the children and family factors.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, marriage, women.

Presenting Author's Biography

Author was born in Ujung Pandang, dated May 9, 1974, a psychology lecturer at the Makassar state university since 2000 until now. Graduated in Psychology Faculty of Bandung Islamic University, Masters in Psychology Faculty of Psychology Padjadjaran University, and completed a PhD at the University of Padjadjaran majoring in psychology.

Experience writing: Training modules improve the resilience of mothers of children with ADHD (2010), Conflict Resolution Marital In Women Divorced and Married Women in Makassar (published in the national scientific meeting of Airlangga University, 2014), Protection Factor to prevent the occurrence of "spoliation" on teenagers / students (published in the Regional Conference UNIMED, 2014), Trait, Adult Attachment, and Emotion Regulation Support on Marital Conflict Resolution (Dissertation, 2015), Conflict resolution For Women with Multiple Roles and Women as Housewife (published on the 7th of Asian Association of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology (AAICP) International Conference Bandung, 2015), and the Adult Attachment Effect to Constructive Conflict Resolution on Marriage Couple (published in the International Conference on Guidance and Counseling, Human Resources and Human Development Malaysia, 2015).

1. Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable matter in marriage. Differences between husband and wife once they enter their marriage life become obvious. A number of shortcomings such as attitudes, ways of thinking, decision making, motives, interests, and habits, might become clearer. As a matter of fact, these could be a germ of conflict in the marriage, in case it is not resolved immediately.

Conflict is a situation in which there are occurrences or events, motives, goals, behavior, impulse equally contradictory (Reber & Reber, 2010). It may occur in the social groups, organizations, international relationship, as well as in interpersonal relationship. The conflict between two groups or among groups or between two people or among people, however, will trigger tension and strife since each party will show off its domination or strength.

In marriage, conflict could be considered as interpersonal one. This conflict basically has similarity with sectarian conflict, in which it is evoked due to the difference in motives, goals, opinions, beliefs, or attitudes between two parties. According to Miller & Pearlman (2009), interpersonal conflict occurs when an individual's desire or action impedes the other's expectation. In many cases, both husband and wife are often unaware that the desires and their actions interfere or hinder their partner.

Nevertheless, marital conflict must be addressed to achieve a harmonious marriage life. Although the conflict is an absolute in a marriage, but if not completed properly, it will harm the marriage. Marital life often filled with conflict and strife are at risk of experiencing marital dissatisfaction and prone to divorce (Kline, *et al.*, 2006). On the contrary, harmonious marriage will make people happier and more physically fit and in addition, it will stimulate more prosperous and healthy sexual life (Noller, *et al.*, 2002).

Harmony in marriage affect to happiness and increasingly the quality of life of individuals who are bound in the marriage. In his study, Gottman (1994) finds out that people with happy marriage, in fact, live longer and healthier than people with unhappy marriage. In addition, people growing up in a peace and tranquil family show higher capabilities and skills both at home and in the social life. They are more confident and happier compared to people with miserable childhood. Likewise, children who grow up in an intact family also display better physical and mental health, in addition to higher achievement in education and career (Noller, *et al.*, 2002).

Marriages are often overwhelmed with conflicts which will bring destruction if it is not resolved properly, particularly for the children. Jones Beach and Fincham suggest that family relationships are filled with pressure display symptoms of depression in children. Also added by Jones, Beach, & Fincham that the conflict in the marriage more often bring a negative impact on children, especially for the intense, physical involvement, unresolved conflict, and conflicts associated with children's behavior. Dispute or conflict is not resolved properly are more likely to recur frequently, even causing household problems are not resolved. Conflicts are not resolved properly causing marital relationship deteriorated which lead to the divorce. Data divorce Makassar Court from 2009 to 2013 show the divorce rate continues to increase, especially divorce cases proposed by the wife (Religious Court of Makassar, 2014). Over 70 % of cases of divorce were proposed by the wives.

Research conducted by Muin (2014) revealed that the decision to divorce is an attitude of surrender of women to conflict they experienced. In the study also revealed women's attitudes toward conflict quite diverse ranging from blaming each other, trying to be patient, and avoiding the conflict discussion. These various responses indicated that marital conflict resolution was influences by several factors. This study aimed to figure out these factors.

2. Methods

Respondents in this study consisted of 107 married women in Makassar. The ages are specified between 18-40 years old. It was non-random sampling and accidental sampling technique. To gather information from the respondents, questionnaire was composed with a number of open questions regarding with the factors that influence the individual's resolution in facing marital conflicts. Each

respondent provides the answer without any alternative answer. The answers were inserted in the answer column and grouped by their similarity. Furthermore, the groups of answers were sorted in a series from the highest percentage to the smallest.

3. Results and Discussion

The study which was conducted with 107 married women as the respondents figured out the factors that influence marital conflict resolution. They can be seen in the following table:

Table 1
Factors Affect the Marital Conflict Resolution

| | | |
|---|----------------|--------|
| The ability to manage emotion | 53 respondents | 49.5 % |
| Relationship pattern/attachment with spouse | 25 respondents | 23.0 % |
| Trait | 18 respondents | 16.8 % |
| Children factor | 7 respondents | 6.5 % |
| Family support | 4 respondents | 3.7 % |

The analysis of the questionnaires indicated the importance of emotional management in encountering the conflict. The respondents revealed the challenges in facing a conflict are to reverse the negative emotions, to avoid quarrel, and tense dispute. Most of the respondents are aware that emotional management should be preceded before resolving the conflict. Negative emotions come from their spouse will only make the situation worse.

The interview also indicated the importance of emotional management in resolving the conflict. This finding is in accordance with Fardis Clore (2007) who suggests the cognitive function which includes the settlement of the problem is influenced by emotions. Gottman and Levenson (2002) notice the way the couples overcome negative feeling will determine the success of the marriage. Expression showed off during the conflict also determines the appropriate way in the settlement of marriage conflict. Due to the significance of expression, it can be assumed as one factor which influences conflict resolution.

Several previous studies have addressed the effects of emotion regulation associated with conflict and conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, among other research suggests the importance of emotion regulation during the conflict as indicated by Parke, Mc. Dowell, Cladis, and Leydi in Snyder, Simpson, & Hugest (2006). It is similar with Mason's finding on the relationship between adult attachment and emotion regulation in the conflict. Another research by Papp (2004) on the dimension of marital conflict at home, parents' psychological symptoms, and adjustment of the child, also discusses the relation between emotions with conflict situations. Landner (2006) also suggests the effect of emotion on the conflict and how conflict affects the emotion.

Several studies propound emotion regulation as part of the process of the conflict, or as the dependent variable. Most of them emphasize the role of emotional expression during the conflict and discuss the factors that accompany emotions as marital conflict, although the effect of emotion regulation on marital conflict resolution is not specified. It is contrasted to the respondents on this study who put emotion regulation as an influential factor and a parameter whether the settlement of marital conflict can be resolved properly or not. Emotion regulation is not only a form of individual emotional reactions to negative emotions, but also the ability to manage negative emotions to resolve the conflict.

The second factor is relationship pattern and bonding between the spouses which facilitate or inhibit women to resolve the conflict. The study found out the importance of attachment to handle, compromise, and discuss the difference or conflict. Couple who lives separately tends to avoid discussing the conflict. Patterns of relationship described by the women indicated that marital relationship forms interdependence in terms of affection and closeness, as referred by Bowlby (1969) as adult attachment. This pattern is one factor that affects women to cover their marital problem.

Adult attachment influences women's decision to resolve the conflict properly or rather to ignore it. Pietromonaco, Greenwood, & Barrett (2004) suggest that in facing a conflict, the bond or attachment between the spouse could be in a threat or in contrast, would be strengthened. The capability to resolve the conflict completely will provide motivation to improve the relationship quality. Positive relationship also stimulates a couple to resolve marital conflict constructively.

Opinions on the effect of viscosity adults with interpersonal conflict were discussed by experts, namely: Bartholomew & Horowitz, Collins & Read, Pietromonaco & Barrett, in Pietromonaco, Greenwood, and Barrett (2004) which reveals individual differences in responding the conflict, in association with the thought different individuals in the working models of attachment, which include the expectations, beliefs, and goals of individuals in relation to other people or their partner. It reports the dispute couple tends to be influenced by the attachment quality (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer in Johnson and Whiffen (2008). Therefore, a person's attitude towards the conflict is largely determined by how the spouse's pattern of relationship.

The third factor is trait. Women who have agreeableness trait will be easier to accept the reason why her partner made a mistake. While the stubborn, tend to be very difficult to accept it, even the attitude sparked the conflict became increasingly heated and difficult to overcome.

Personality trait dimensions also determine how to resolve conflict. Duetsch (2006) revealed that a person's personality played a role in resolving the conflict. Furthermore, Mc Crae & Costa affirm that personality factors affect the appearance of conflict on the couple, in addition, it also determines how individuals behave and solve the problems that arise in marriage.

Children and family are the external factors that influence marital conflict resolution as they will be required to behave courteously. The results showed that women who consider their children and family will make an attempt to solve the conflict peacefully. Living in the neighborhood where parents, parents-in-law, or other relatives will avoid the exposure of marital conflict, therefore, they will solve the conflict intensively.

4. Conclusion

Factors which influence marital conflict resolution consist of internal and external factors. The internal factors are the regulation of emotion, attachment with couple, and individual's properties. Meanwhile, the external factors are the child and family factor. The emotion regulation is the most dominant factor in determining the marital conflict resolution. Subsequently, the attachment with partner and trait contribute to determine the positive solution to overcome the conflict.

The external factors, namely children and family factors are evidenced to have small percentage, but they are sufficient enough to affect the settlement of marital conflict constructively. Both of these factors encourage women to restrain the behavior of conflict resolution which might not be expected by the children and family, so there are attempts to show a more constructive conflict resolution.

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