

Marital Adjustment: Developing a New Measurement Construct in Indonesia

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Abstract

Marital adjustment can be measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). However, the criticisms embedded in watersheds are statistical problems. This study aims to compile and develop a marital adjustment measurement tool in Indonesian. The subjects in the study were as many as 298 people. This research was carried out online and offline. The reliability analysis used Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α), and the validity analysis used the construct validity technique using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The validity of the criteria was tested by comparing the total score of the marital adjustment measuring tool with the total score of the marriage satisfaction measuring tool. The results of this study showed that the reliability was .991 (58 items; $N = 58$). Meanwhile, the results of construct validity show that the model proposed in this study cannot be said to be suitable, so the marriage adjustment measurement tool has poor construct validity (CFI value < 0.95 ; RMSEA value > 0.06). In the analysis of the validity of the criteria, it is known that the correlation coefficient of .950 ($p < .001$), so that the marital adjustment measuring tool has good criteria. Thus, the items that are arranged are good enough to describe the marital adjustment that is to be measured.

Abstrak

Penyesuaian pernikahan dapat diukur menggunakan Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Namun, kritik-kritik yang disematkan pada skala tersebut merupakan permasalahan statistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyusun dan mengembangkan alat ukur penyesuaian pernikahan dalam bahasa Indonesia. Subjek dalam penelitian adalah sebanyak 298 orang. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan secara daring dan luring. Analisis reliabilitas menggunakan nilai *Cronbach's alpha coefficient* (α), sedangkan analisis validitas menggunakan teknik validitas konstruk *confirmatory factor analysis* (CFA). Validitas kriteria diuji dengan membandingkan skor total dari alat ukur penyesuaian pernikahan dengan skor total alat ukur kepuasan pernikahan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa reliabilitas sebesar 0,991 (58 pernyataan; $N = 58$). Hasil validitas konstruk menunjukkan bahwa model yang diajukan dalam penelitian ini belum dapat dikatakan cocok sehingga alat ukur penyesuaian pernikahan memiliki validitas konstruk yang kurang baik (CFI $< 0,95$; RMSEA $> 0,06$). Dalam analisis validitas kriteria, diketahui bahwa nilai korelasi sebesar 0,950 ($p < 0,001$), sehingga alat ukur penyesuaian pernikahan memiliki kriteria yang baik. Oleh karena itu, pernyataan yang disusun cukup baik untuk menggambarkan penyesuaian pernikahan yang ingin diukur.



INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important aspect of social life that is closely related to mental health (Channa, 2016). When a person gets married, of course, he has expectations about the behavior that his partner should have and about the harmony of the relationship that should be established with his partner. However, after marriage, these expectations can differ from the reality in marriage and often with these differences, individuals must be able to adjust themselves to a marriage that is influenced by the differences between expectations and reality (Hall & Adams, 2011; Hull & Adams, 2020). The happiness and satisfaction that arise from a harmonious marriage play an important role in the life of a married couple because they affect the physical and psychological health of the couple (Yalcin & Karahan, 2007). The existence of incompatibilities and differences in character and thinking between couples can cause dissatisfaction and the quality of interaction between couples to be poor (McNulty & Karney, 2002; Hall & Adams, 2011; Hull & Adams, 2020). In minimizing dissatisfaction and poor relationship quality, couples often need to be able to adjust themselves to be in tune with their partner in fostering a relationship. Some of the factors that affect marriage adjustment are spiritual well-being and locus of control (Bedir Akpınarlı & Eryücel, 2024), marital intimacy and job satisfaction (Bakhshi & Sadeghi, 2023), and the number of children in marriage (Saheba & Mansuri, 2020).

Marital adjustments can affect quality of life. In fact, previous research states that marital adjustment is very important for various clinical and psychological purposes of humans, including influencing and being useful for mental health, psychological well-being (Sajjad & Thakur, 2025), and somatic health to affect a person's lifespan (longevity). With an important and profound influence on human life, social psychology researchers routinely measure the constructs of marital adjustment in their research. Marital adjustment can be measured by a variety of approaches, including structured clinical interviews, role-play behavioral procedures, and in vivo observation (Carey et al., 1993; Moser et al., 2015). However, the method that clinical scientists use more often in looking at marital adjustment is to use self-report questionnaires. At least 20 self-report measures of marital adjustment have been widely developed (Spanier, 1979; Moser et al., 2015). One of the most frequently used measurements is the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) from Spanier (1976). Besides DAS by Spanier, there are also several other instruments, such as the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) by Locke and Wallace (1959), the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) by Nichols et al. (1983), and also Marital Interaction Scale by Weiss and Cerreto (1980). Each instrument has a different approach and focus on aspects of the marital relationship, such as emotional satisfaction, behavioral interactions, and communication quality. Although watersheds are widely used because they are considered comprehensive and oriented towards a diced approach, criticism of overlap between subscales and limitations in cultural representation has driven the need for alternatives that are more appropriate to local contexts. If you look at the definitions of previous scientists related to marital adjustments, the definitions developed are quite different from each other. This confused subsequent researchers in interpreting marital adjustment and developing a new construct in measuring marital adjustment according to the conditions and context being studied. Lewis and Spanier (1975) said that marital adjustment is closely related to the quality of relationships, where subjective evaluation is important in a marriage relationship. In addition, in 1976, Spanier said that the difference between marital adjustment and marital satisfaction lies in the unit of analysis (Moser et al., 2015). Spanier (1976) takes a dyadic approach, where conformity in marriage is the interaction of two individuals who live it, while marital satisfaction is more individual. Meanwhile, marital happiness is often associated with individual emotional states and is more dynamic in nature. The above can at least answer a little confusion that exists regarding marital adjustments, marital satisfaction, and marital happiness.

Spanier (1976) concludes that marital adjustment is a process, the result of a relationship that is influenced by the degree of divergence of views on marriage that is troublesome, tensions between individuals within the couple and personal anxiety, marital satisfaction, cohesion of dyadic, and consensus on things important to the functioning of marriage (Moser et al., 2015). These factors are the origin of the dimensions in the DAS created by Spanier (1976), which tries to make a more parsimonious marital adjustment measurement tool by analyzing the factors of existing items from various kinds of marriage satisfaction measuring tools, marital adjustments, and other similar concepts made into one (Moser et al., 2015). Of the many existing items, items that tend to be similar to other items that exist in the same dimension are eliminated so that, in the end, they are summarized into 32 items representing four dimensions: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affection expression. The criticisms attached to the watershed are statistical problems, based on the problems encountered on the four subscales in marital adjustment, which have overlapping statements and based on factor analysis, several statements from different subscales can be combined into a single statement. For example, items from the dyadic satisfaction subscale are combined with items from the dyadic consensus subscale. Researchers who choose watershed as a measure of dependent variables in their research will show a very strong relationship between dimensions, because each dimension is interrelated with the others (Graham et al., 2006; Jardine et al., 2022). Most marriage adjustment measuring tools were developed in the context of Western culture. These instruments often do not consider the values, norms, and relationship structures in Eastern cultures or non-Western societies, including in Indonesia (Kim et al., 2008). Therefore, the validity and relevance of the context an important challenge in the cross-cultural application of the instrument. The need to develop an Indonesian version of marriage adjustment measures is very urgent, in order to capture the dynamics of couple relationships within the framework of local cultural values. In addition to adapting to language, development is also important in psychometric aspects such as content validity, factor structure, and population norms. The main focus of this study is on the development of marriage adjustment instruments that are culturally relevant and have strong validity, so that they can be used in both academic research and clinical practice in Indonesia.

METHODS

Participants

This study uses a research method with a quantitative approach. The subjects in the study were 298 people. The implementation of data collection is carried out offline and online. The offline implementation involved 62 participants located at the Faculty of Psychology and the postgraduate reading room of the University of Indonesia library. The online implementation involved 236 participants using a Google Form distributed through WhatsApp messages and other social media. Using two different data collection techniques, namely offline and online, this study was carried out for 4 weeks.

The participants involved were selected using the accidental sampling technique, which is a sampling technique by chance, that is, everyone who was met by accident/incidental and willing to become a participant in the research, if the person met was very suitable to be used as a data source (Sugiyono, 2017). Participants who are suitable as data sources in this study are participants with the following criteria: (1) married and still married; (2) have been married for at least 1 year.

Based on Fowers and Olson (1993), the selection of participants with such criteria is based on the consideration that experience in undergoing marriage for at least one year allows the individual to have experienced relevant relationship dynamics to measure marital adjustments. In addition, the

active involvement of married couples is also important in identifying the functioning of dimensions in marital adjustments, such as consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion (Canel, 2013).

Instruments

In constructing the marital adjustment measuring tool, the researcher used four dimensions developed by Spanier (1976): dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affection expression. Each dimension has its own indicators, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 1.
Marital Adjustment Dimensions and Indicators

Dimension	Indicator
Dyadic Consensus	Related couple agreements: pleasure satisfaction, philosophical matters in marriage, important things in marriage, as well as the couple's attitude towards others
Dyadic Satisfaction	Couples have a low intensity of arguments, have a positive perception of their partner, and have no regrets about their partner in a relationship.
Dyadic Cohesion	The couple's interest in the same thing, and they discuss what they have in common.
Affection Expression	The way couples express their feelings, and express their sexual intercourse that is performed.

Procedure

This research has three stages:

1. *Preparation stage.* The researchers conducted a feasibility study to find gaps that were not seen in previous studies and found relevant research to support the new gaps found in this study.
2. *Trial stage.* After conducting a literature study to find the dimensions used in developing a measuring tool, the researcher compiled a marital adjustment measuring tool of 70 items that underwent two revisions (reliability and expert judgement) because some items had high social desirability, so that as many as 67 items remained. Next, a readability test was carried out, which then received feedback related to the size of the writing that was too small and sentences on items that were less effective and difficult to understand their meaning. The readability test was given to 10 participants whose criteria were the same as the original sample, namely, married individuals who had been married for at least one year. Several items looked similar, so to avoid saturation from the participants, the researchers removed nine items that looked similar. Thus, at the trial stage, only 58 items were given to participants.
3. *Data collection stage.* Data collection was carried out offline and online, involving 62 people (offline) and 236 people (online). Data collection was carried out for 4 weeks.

Data Analysis

In analyzing each item in the marital adjustment measurement tool being developed, the researcher used several testing techniques, namely:

1. *Reliability testing techniques.* In this study, reliability testing techniques were used by looking at Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) value (Taherdoost, 2016; DeVellis, 2005). It is based on estimating the internal consistency of a test where an item is not graded as a 0 or 1 (true or false), to see one's attitude towards a statement (Taherdoost, 2016; DeVellis, 2005).
2. *Validity testing techniques.* In this researcher, the construct validity and criterion validity testing techniques were used. For the validity of the construct, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was

used to find out whether the marital adjustment measuring tool really measured the marital adjustment construct represented by behavioral indicators and had four dimensions according to the dimensions used by Spanier (1976). According to Brown (2015), in testing the validity of an instrument's construct, the data analysis technique that is often used is CFA. As for the validity of the criteria, it was tested by comparing the total score of the marital adjustment measurement tool with the total score of the marriage satisfaction measurement tool developed by Romundor (2013). This marriage satisfaction measuring tool has been tested for validity and reliability. The method used for the reliability test is a single trial with the Cronbach's alpha formula, and the method for the validity test is content validity, with expert judgment interviews, and criterion-related validity, using correlation with the overall marriage satisfaction rating.

3. *Item analysis techniques*. This analysis technique uses a discrimination analysis method involving a criterion, namely, item total correlation. Item discrimination index analysis is carried out to determine the homogeneity of items by correlating items with total scores.
4. *Norm preparation techniques*. This study uses the within-group norm method as a norm determinant with a linear transformation aimed at quantitative interests. This method is used to calculate the range with the aim of seeing the category where the individual is located.

RESULTS

From the data collection carried out for 4 weeks in developing a marriage adjustment measurement tool, results were obtained in the form of reliability, validity, item analysis, to norm preparation. The marital adjustment measurement tool is constructed based on four dimensions: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affection expression.

Reliability Test Results

Based on the reliability test using Cronbach's alpha, the marital adjustment measuring instrument obtained $\alpha = .991$ (58 items, $N = 58$). According to Urbina (2004), a reliability coefficient of .80 or more indicates high internal consistency, so this marital adjustment test is declared reliable. There is 99% of the observed score variance, which is the actual score variance, and 1% is the error variance originating from content sampling error and content heterogeneity error.

Validity Test Results

Construct validity testing was conducted using CFA in RStudio, using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator. With the criteria of $CFI > 0.95$, $RMSEA < 0.06$, and $SRMR < 0.08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Umar & Nisa, 2020), the results were $CFI = 0.728$, $RMSEA = 0.127$, and $SRMR = 0.048$. These results indicate that only the SRMR value meets the standards, while the RMSEA and CFI do not. This indicates that the model proposed in this study is not yet considered appropriate, and the marital adjustment measurement tool has poor construct validity.

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) value in this study was 0.841, exceeding the requirements for a good model, which is 0.80 (Hair et al., 2010). The chi-square value obtained in this study was 0.00, whereas according to Hair et al. (2010), a model in an instrument can be said to be good if the chi-square value is greater than 0.05. With several requirements not met in construct validity, it can be said that the model in the measuring instrument developed can be said to be less robust and less precise in describing the variables to be measured.

The second validity test used is criterion validity by comparing the total score of the marriage adjustment measuring tool that is being developed with the total score of the marriage satisfaction measurement tool developed by Rumondor (2013). The total score correlation is analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Based on the validity test, a correlation of .950 ($p = .000$) was obtained. According to Urbina (2004), the cut-off correlation between the measuring instrument and

the comparator was $\geq .40$, which means that the marital adjustment measuring tool has good criterion validity.

The marital adjustment measuring tool developed has high validity criteria. The use of correlation analysis aims to analyze the validity of marital adjustment items from an alternative perspective in interpreting the conceptual or interpretation of the test results on the measurement tool used (Taherdoost, 2016). Based on the compatibility test of models that are not fit in the validity of the construct using CFA, other alternative validity tests are carried out using criterion validity to see the validity per item. From the results obtained in the criterion validity, in the analysis of each item in the marital adjustment measurement tool, it is known to have good criterion validity, so that the items in the measuring tool can still be used to describe marital adjustment.

Item Analysis Testing

Based on the recommended $\text{Crit} \geq 0.24$ criterion, all items met the acceptable threshold (Considine et al., 2005). The correlations obtained were statistically significant, indicating that each item demonstrated adequate discriminatory ability. The next step was to select the items with the highest Crit values from each indicator and dimension to achieve the target of 32 items while ensuring adequate representation.

Table 2.
Integrated Items

Crit	No. Item	Σ Item
≥ 0.2	1-58	58
≤ 0.2	-	0

Retesting the Reliability and Validity of Item Analysis Results

Previously, in testing the validity of the contract using CFA, an unfit model was produced, so after the items were analyzed, the researcher retested the reliability and validity of the criteria with 32 target items, obtaining a reliability result of .990 and a criterion validity result of .936. Based on these results, the internal consistency of the items of the marital adjustment measurement tool decreased by .001, and the validity of the criteria decreased by .014. On the other hand, a factor analysis was also retested using CFA. Based on the test, the results of $\text{CFI} = 0.852$, $\text{RMSEA} = 0.126$, and $\text{SRMR} = 0.039$. However, according to the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), the fit model is the model that has an RMSEA value of < 0.06 , $\text{SRMR} < 0.08$, and $\text{CFI} > 0.9$, while after item analysis testing, the model designed in this study still shows the results that the model is not fit.

Norm Preparation

The marital adjustment measurement tool that has been analyzed is in accordance with the target items tested, which are 32 items. The per-item scale consists of 6 points, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. The lowest total score estimate is 32 points, and the highest is 192 points. Norm determination uses the within-group norm method with linear transformation, which aims for quantitative interest in unidimensional measuring instruments.

Table 3.
Norm

True Score	RS	True Score	RS
62	190	48	128
61	185-187	47	124-126

60	181–183	46	119–122
59	176–179	41	99
58	171–174	39	89
57	167–170	38	83–85
56	164–166	37	79
55	158–162	36	77–78
54	154–157	34	67–68
53	149–151	33	61–64
52	146	32	58–60
51	141–143	31	54–56
50	137	29	45
49	132–134	28	39

After the item scores were summed, based on the estimated score adjusted for the number of items and the per-item scale, none of the participants received the lowest (32) or highest (192) total score. The existing norm table is used to interpret the location of the existence of individual scores against the standard deviation (*SD*) $\pm 3 SD$. Suppose an individual has a true score of 62, which is 1.2 *SD*. In that case, the individual’s position is above average, while an individual who has a true score of 47, which is $-0.3 SD$, then the individual’s position is below the average.

DISCUSSION

Marital adjustment has long been a research variable and is often used as a basis for knowing that a person can adjust to his or her partner, and vice versa. This research aims to develop a measure of marital adjustment in the Indonesian context, which is expected to be more in line with the cultural and social conditions of Indonesian society. Marital adjustment can be defined as a mental state between couples who feel happiness and satisfaction in the marriage that they are living. Marital adjustment can show emotional stability, intellectual efficiency and social effectiveness of individuals (Nurjanah, 2022). The impact of the aspect of self-adjustment is so great in a person’s life with their partner, so it is important for couples to be able to understand their marital conditions and adjust themselves in the newly established marital relationship (Nurjanah, 2022).

From this study, it is shown that the marital adjustment measuring tool has a high coefficient of reliability and validity. This is because the items made are good enough to describe the behavior to be measured. On the other hand, testing the validity of the criteria using a comparator of marriage satisfaction measures yielded a high coefficient. This can happen because marital satisfaction is one of the dimensions used in developing a marital adjustment measurement tool in this study. However, these results are inversely proportional to the factor analysis test using CFA, which produces an unfit model. This is because the data obtained is not distributed normally.

Previous research conducted by Graham et al. (2006) found that watersheds have limitations in measuring the dimensions of marital adjustment due to the overlap between subscales. Criticism of watersheds is also seen in this study. Factor analysis shows that several items from different subscales have a very high correlation, indicating a repetition in measurements. This is in line with the criticism that has been given to DAS, that several dimensions, such as dyadic satisfaction and dyadic consensus, are very closely related and difficult to separate conceptually.

The norms on the marital adjustment measurement tool can only be used to see the position of individuals who have above-average and below-average marital adjustments. In addition, the data

obtained in this study shows that the data is not normally distributed, so it does not represent the actual sample. Therefore, it is not possible to make a categorization that distinguishes individuals who can adjust and those who are less able to adjust to their partner in marriage.

Other studies have also discussed marital adjustment through several aspects. For example, effective communication and self-openness between spouses play an important role in achieving good marital adjustment despite being geographically separated (Saputra et al., 2023). This is in line with the results of research conducted by Rini (2009), who found that self-openness has a positive correlation with marital adjustments, which emphasizes the importance of open communication in a healthy marriage relationship. In contrast to Abbas et al. (2019), who found that social support was positively related to marital adjustments. Through several studies related to marital adjustment, it is hoped that the next research can find a suitable model based on empirical theories.

CONCLUSION

This research obtained 32 items of marital adjustment measuring instruments that had been prepared and had passed the testing stage in constructing a measuring instrument. In this study, it is shown that the marital adjustment measurement tool has a high coefficient of realism and validity. On the other hand, testing the validity of the criteria using a comparator of marriage satisfaction measures yielded a high coefficient. It is also known that the marital adjustment measuring tool has a good reliability value in the sense of having high internal consistency. However, this study also shows that the data obtained is not distributed normally, so for the next study, it is necessary to review the participants who are the subject of the study to adjust the measurements to be seen in the study. In addition, the next researcher also needs to design another model that is suitable for marital adjustment measuring instruments, so that they can develop a more perfect marital adjustment measuring instrument.

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