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## The role of family functioning in marital commitment: the moderating effect of adult attachment style

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### Abstract

**Background:** The number of divorces reached 29% of the number of marriages that occurred in 2023, a notable increase compared to 2010, which only reached 4-6%. Various reasons that can cause separation make it very important to have marital commitment.

**Purpose:** To explore the role of family functioning in marital commitment with adult attachment style as a moderator in early adults.

**Method:** A quantitative study with 208 respondents aged between 20 and 39 years, 48 married men and 160 married women. The Indonesian adapted version of the Investment Model Scale, General Functioning of the McMaster Family Assessment Device, and Attachment Style Questionnaire were used as instruments.

**Results:** The results of this study found that family functioning has a role in contributing to marital commitment by 47%, and moderated regression analysis showed that only dismissing attachment style moderated the role of family functioning on marital commitment.

**Conclusion:** This finding is likely because factors such as the presence of children, religious values, social stigma, and positive views on marriage problems play a more important role in influencing marital commitment than adult attachment style.

**Keywords:** Adult Attachment Style; Early Adulthood; Family Functioning; Marital Commitment.

### INTRODUCTION

The divorce rate reached 29% of the number of marriages in 2023, which cannot be considered a small number. When compared to the divorce rate in 2010, which was only 4-6% of marriages, it can be said that there has been a significant increase in the divorce rate in Indonesia over the past 10 years (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 2018). This data demonstrates that society today has a more open perspective on the option of separation in marital relationships (Olson, 2020). Another phenomenon that indicates a bad marriage is often seen in the form of a third party involvement in the marriage. Those who engage in infidelity tend to feel that what they are doing is part of everyday life, a form of short-term entertainment, and a game. One of the feelings that

arises in those who engage in infidelity is that their partner's infidelity can bring pleasant emotions that are not currently being experienced in their marital relationship (Arwa, Ronda, & Hanafi, 2023). It is important for couples to maintain harmony in their marriage, because divorce not only affects them, but also affects their children. According to research, children who experience family breakdown tend to suffer psychological effects due to changes in family circumstances and the negative emotions that arise during their parents' separation process. Children whose parents separate may feel ashamed of their family situation, which can affect their ability to socialize with their peers and increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior. Parental separation also increases the likelihood of educational failure because

children experience a decline in motivation to learn, which leads to a decline in academic achievement (Ardilla & Cholid, 2021).

Various reasons that can lead to separation make it very important for couples to be committed to their marriage. Commitment in marriage, according to the investment model developed by Caryl Rusbult, is a force that makes couples interested in the relationship they are in and prevents them from leaving that relationship (Wyatt, 2019). Based on the investment model perspective, commitment in a romantic relationship has three determinants, namely satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size (Rusbult et al., 2018). Satisfaction level refers to the extent to which the outcome of a marriage can meet the expectations set for that relationship. Quality of alternatives refers to the quality of other alternatives available outside of marriage. The final determinant of marital commitment is investment size, which refers to the amount of investment made by individuals in the relationship. Investment is a resource expended by individuals, which can take the form of time, money, or effort. Several theories explaining problems in marital commitment mention that factors such as the personality or character of the couple, their ability to communicate, their coping skills, and the way the couple relates to their social roles affect the quality of commitment in marriage (Zhou, Wang, & Yu, 2018). The way couples behave, communicate about matters related to their marriage, solve problems, and convey messages of affection is also related to family functioning.

Family functioning is the perception held by family members regarding the efforts made in fulfilling family tasks, such as basic tasks, developmental tasks, and hazardous tasks. Basic family tasks include fulfilling basic needs, such as food and shelter. Then there are developmental tasks, which include fulfilling the needs of each family member in relation to their individual and family development stages. The last category of tasks included in the family's fulfillment efforts are hazardous tasks, which are related to illness, accidents, loss of income, job changes, and so on. Family functioning has six dimensions, namely problem solving, communication, roles, affective response, affective involvement, and behavioral control (Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller, & Keitner,

2023). Another factor that can influence marital commitment is adult attachment style. Adult attachment style, by definition, refers to the assessment given by individuals to themselves and their attachment figures in adulthood. There are four attachment styles that occur in individuals, namely secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. Bowlby's model of the self and model of the other can be combined to explain attachment in adulthood. Secure attachment style means that individuals are able to love themselves and have a positive view of other individuals' feelings towards them. Preoccupied attachment style means that individuals do not value themselves but give positive evaluations of other individuals. Fearful attachment style means that individuals do not value themselves and also have a negative view of other people's feelings towards them. and a dismissing attachment style means that individuals are able to love themselves but have a negative assessment of others' feelings towards them (Bartholomew, & Horowitz, 2021).

These four styles cause differences in each individual, thereby influencing their commitment to marriage. The results of the study found that a secure attachment style has a positive relationship with commitment to marriage. Meanwhile, avoidant and anxious attachment styles tend to have a negative relationship with marital commitment (Khumairoh & Undarwati, 2015). Previous research has found that adult attachment style is quite stable in humans (Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2024). Another finding regarding adult attachment style is that preoccupied and fearful attachment styles are related to love addiction. The preoccupied attachment style is characterized by a fear that others will not be available when needed, engaging in anxious searches for love and support, and dependence on the desire to be in a committed relationship. Meanwhile, the fearful attachment style is characterized by distrust of others' intentions, compulsive self-reliance, and low romantic experiences (Gori, Russo, & Topino, 2023).

Based on data obtained by the Palembang Public Relations Agency in 2023, most divorce petitioners are individuals aged 25-35 years old (Palembang Public Relations Coordination Agency, 2023). Therefore, based on this data, it can be concluded that although early adulthood is a period when individuals begin to build a family, there are also many who

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decide to separate from their partners during this developmental stage. This research is also deemed necessary given that parental separation tends to have a negative impact on children.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative moderation regression. The population in this study consisted of individuals aged between 20 and 39 years who were currently married. The sampling method used in this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique that starts with a small number of subjects and then expands. The first step in the sampling process is to select several research subjects. The minimum sample size in this study was determined using power analysis. This analysis determines the minimum sample size by considering the research model and the number of predictor variables in the study. The results of the power analysis conducted using the G\*Power 3.1.9.7 program show that the minimum sample size required in this study is 138 people, with a specified effect size of 0.15 (medium), an  $\alpha$  value of 0.05, a power value of 0.95, and there are 5 predictors (family functioning, secure attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, fearful attachment style, and dismissing attachment style) tested in this study.

All measurement tools used in this study were adapted from previous researchers. The Indonesian

version of the Investment Model Scale consists of 37 items used to measure marital commitment, which were adapted into Indonesian by Edwina, Megarini, and Maria in 2018. The results of validity and reliability testing show that this measuring instrument has a validity range of 0.457-0.841 and a reliability range of 0.793-0.922. The General Functioning of McMaster Family Assessment Device, which has 12 items used to measure the variable of family functioning in this study, is a measuring instrument adapted into Indonesian by Sasmi in 2021. The validity range of this adapted measurement tool is between 0.454-0.803 and Cronbach's alpha reliability is 0.898. The Indonesian version of the Attachment Style Questionnaire was adapted by Fitriana & Fitria in 2016 to measure adult attachment style. There are 17 items that passed the test with a validity range between 0.507-0.782 and reliability values between 0.580-0.695. Research data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The data obtained were analyzed using moderated regression analysis to analyze the moderation of adult attachment style on the role of family functioning in marital commitment. Before performing moderated regression analysis, researchers need to perform classical assumption tests first. The assumption tests performed were normality tests, multicollinearity tests, and heteroscedasticity tests.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents (N=208)**

| Variable                                               | Results                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Age (Mean<math>\pm</math>SD)(Range)(Years)(n/%)</b> | (30.9 $\pm$ 3.5)(20-40) |
| 20-35                                                  | 8/3.8                   |
| 26-30                                                  | 88/42.3                 |
| 31-35                                                  | 78/37.5                 |
| $\geq 35$                                              | 34/16.4                 |
| <b>Gender (n/%)</b>                                    |                         |
| Female                                                 | 160/76.9                |
| Male                                                   | 48/23.1                 |
| <b>Occupation (n/%)</b>                                |                         |
| Teacher                                                | 59/28.4                 |
| Civil Servant                                          | 32/15.4                 |
| Private Employees                                      | 59/28.4                 |

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|                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Midwife                             | 1/0.5    |
| Housewife                           | 36/17.3  |
| Self-employed/business owner        | 21/10.0  |
| <b>Marriage Age (n/%)</b>           |          |
| <1 - 5 years                        | 105/50.5 |
| 6 - 10 years                        | 77/37.0  |
| 11 - 15 years                       | 22/10.6  |
| ≥15 years                           | 4/1.9    |
| <b>Number of Children (n/%)</b>     |          |
| No Children                         | 23/11.1  |
| 1-2                                 | 158/76.0 |
| 3-4                                 | 27/12.9  |
| <b>Adult Attachment Style (n/%)</b> |          |
| Secure                              | 68/32.7  |
| Preoccupied                         | 18/8.6   |
| Fearful                             | 37/17.8  |
| Dismissing                          | 85/40.9  |

Table shows the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of respondents. The mean age was 30.9 ± 3.5 years (range 20–40), with most aged 26–30 years (42.3%) and 31–35 years (37.5%). The majority were female (76.9%) and worked as teachers or private employees (each 28.4%). More than half were married for 1–5 years (50.5%), and most had 1–2 children (76.0%). Regarding adult attachment style, dismissing was most common (40.9%), followed by secure (32.7%), fearful (17.8%), and preoccupied (8.6%).

**Table 2. Average Marriage Commitment Scores of Research Subjects**

| Characteristics                 | Category      | Average Score |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Marriage Duration</b>        | <1 - 5 years  | 182.64        |
|                                 | 6 - 10 years  | 178.19        |
|                                 | 11 - 15 years | 176.95        |
|                                 | ≥15 years     | 180.75        |
| <b>Female Research Subjects</b> | Working       | 179.29        |
|                                 | Not working   | 181.28        |

Table presents the average scores based on marriage duration and employment status of female respondents. The highest mean score was observed in those married for less than 5 years (182.64), followed by those married ≥15 years (180.75), 6–10 years (178.19), and 11–15 years (176.95). Based on employment status, non-working females had a slightly higher mean score (181.28) compared to working females (179.29).

**Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis of Family Functioning on Marital Commitment**

|                                                    | <i>R Square</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Family Functioning (X) and Marriage Commitment (Y) | 0.470           | 183.016  | 0.000    |

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\*p&lt;0.05

Based on the results of the analysis in Table, it can be seen that the regression test results between family functioning and marital commitment show significant results ( $F=183.016$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). These results mean that research hypothesis 1 can be accepted, namely that family functioning plays a role in marital commitment in early adults who are married.

**Table 4. Results of The Moderated Regression Analysis Test For Variable**

|                                                                                                   | <i>R Square</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>Beta</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Family Functioning (X)* <i>Secure Attachment Style</i> (Moderator) on Marital Commitment (Y)      | 0.504           | 68.995   | -0.340      | 0.432*   |
| Family Functioning (X)* <i>Preoccupied Attachment Style</i> (Moderator) on Marital Commitment (Y) | 0.471           | 60.440   | 0.011       | 0.972*   |
| Family Functioning (X)* <i>Fearful Attachment Style</i> (Moderator) on Marriage Commitment (Y)    | 0.479           | 62.427   | 0.541       | 0.167    |
| Family Functioning (X)* <i>Dismissing Attachment Style</i> (Moderator) on Marital Commitment (Y)  | 0.503           | 68.959   | 0.728       | 0.042    |

\*p&lt;0.05

The results of the analysis in Table show that the results of the *moderated regression analysis* between the interaction of family functioning variables and the four *adult attachment* styles on marital commitment indicate a significant moderation of the *dismissing attachment style* ( $F=68.959$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), while *secure attachment style*, *preoccupied attachment style*, and *fearful attachment style* did not significantly moderate ( $p>0.05$ ). These results can be interpreted as *dismissing attachment style* moderating the role of family functioning on marital commitment- s in early adults who are married. The moderation of *dismissing attachment style* has a positive value ( $Beta=0.728$ ), so that the interaction between family functioning and *dismissing attachment style* strengthens the role of family functioning on marital commitment.

## DISCUSSION

Family functioning plays a significant role in marital commitment, as evidenced by a significance value of 0.000. The  $R_{\text{Square}}$  value, or simple linear regression coefficient of determination, is 0.483, which means that the family functioning variable plays a 48.3% role in marital commitment among young married adults. The results of the study found that high family functioning increases the likelihood of married

couples having emotionally intimate communication, which ultimately leads to a close relationship and improves the quality of marriage, including commitment, for both young and older couples. Conversely, married couples may feel lonely when poor family functioning results in a lack of intimate communication due to unmet aspects of communication, response, and affective involvement in marriage (Suryaningsih, Kaparang, Blegur, Juniarta, & Silitonga, 2024). Married couples need good intimate communication. When both individuals succeed in establishing intimate communication, they will ultimately be able to feel support and openness towards each other in the family, which will help the couple form a good family function. Conversely, when couples are unable to establish intimate communication, it will be difficult to feel the presence and support of their partner, which can result in an increased likelihood of marriage becoming vulnerable to a decline in marital satisfaction and an increase in the quality of alternatives from other parties outside of marriage, which can ultimately reduce marital commitment (Memon, Ting, Cheah, Thurasamy, Chuah, & Cham, 2020).

The results of the study found that family functioning plays a positive role in the level of marital

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commitment. These results mean that the better the family functioning of young adults who are married, the higher their level of marital commitment will be. When a family can form a balanced and flexible family system in the formation of role structures and rules, it will make it easier for couples to function better within the family, thereby forming closeness within the family (Field, 2025). When closeness and communication can be established according to their functions, it will help a couple reduce feelings of loneliness within themselves (Naomi & Edwina, 2024). Roles, especially for married couples that function well, will help couples develop feelings of empathy and emotional closeness that enable them to understand each other's conditions, making them more comfortable to share their feelings, including forming positive relationships. This situation will help couples strengthen their commitment to their marriage (Fitriana & Fitria, 2016).

The data in this study found that there were differences in the average marriage commitment scores among the research subjects based on the length of their marriage. The average marriage commitment score among research subjects who had been married for < 1 year -5 years was 182.64, the group married for 6-10 years was 178.19, the group married for 11-15 years was 176.95, and those who had been married for more than 15 years had an average score of 180.75. The decrease and increase in the average scores of the research subjects based on the length of marriage are in line with the results of previous studies, who found that there was no difference in the marital commitment of women who had been married for 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11-15 years. Women who are married and work have high marital commitment, both those who have been married for 0-10 years and those who have been married for more than 11 years (Indriastuti, 2023). Research on married women in East Nusa Tenggara also found similar results, where their marital commitment was in the high category even though the length of marriage was divided into 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11-15 years (Muloko, Limbu, & Anakaka, 2020).

Based on the results of the moderated regression analysis of the research data, it was found that only the dismissing attachment style moderated the role of family functioning on marital commitment with a Sig.

value of 0.042. Dismissing attachment style influences marital commitment, while secure attachment style does not significantly influence marital commitment. The results of that study also found that the lower a person's dismissing attachment style, the higher their marital commitment (Amelia, 2022). This finding is in line with the negative role of dismissing attachment style on marital commitment (Beta=-0.754) in this study. Another finding in this study is also consistent with other studies that found that insecure avoidant attachment is negatively associated with commitment in dating. The results of this study can be interpreted as the higher the level of insecure avoidant attachment in individuals who are dating, the lower their commitment in the romantic relationship they are currently in (Ananda, 2022).

Social values in Indonesia also influence a person's commitment to marriage. Values regarding the existence of children, religious values, and social stigma in society provide individuals who are married with a foundation for committing to their marriage. A positive outlook on the ability to deal with marital problems also makes individuals committed to their marriage. Problems that arise in marriage are considered normal, so it is easy to regulate emotions when facing challenges in married life (Kinanthi, 2018). The results of the research data analysis also found that the average marriage commitment score among female research subjects who worked was slightly lower than that of female subjects who did not work (only being housewives). Wives who worked with lower incomes had higher commitment to their marriages than wives who worked with higher incomes. Working wives with lower incomes also experience higher marital satisfaction, lower alternative quality, and higher investment in the relationship compared to working wives with higher incomes (Juhari, Yaacob, Mohd Arif, & Sabri, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Family functioning plays a significant role in marital commitment, as evidenced by a Sig. value of 0.000, which is smaller than the significance value  $\alpha$  0.05 or  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Dismissing attachment style in adult attachment style moderates the role of family functioning on marital commitment with a Sig. value of 0.042, which is smaller than the significance value  $\alpha$  0.05. However, secure attachment style, preoccupied

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attachment style, and fearful attachment style did not moderate the role of family functioning on marital commitment with a Sig. value that was not less than the significance value  $\alpha$  0.05.

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