

How Does Interpersonal Communication Influence Marital Satisfaction? Assessing the Sequential Mediation of Marital-Self Disclosure

Hindina Maulida, Dewi Nur Suci, Baiq Vira Safitri

Universitas Tidar, Indonesia, Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri Indonesia, University of Antwerp Belgium

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Abstract

The expectations for marital satisfaction among couples are at an all-time high, amidst the declining marriage rates in Indonesia and the dominance of the digital discourse 'marriage is scary'. This study examines whether marital self-disclosure acts as a crucial mediating mechanism in interpersonal communication, which in turn increasing marital satisfaction. A quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional design was applied to a sample of 225 married individuals in Indonesia, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that interpersonal communication has a strong direct positive impact on marital satisfaction and marital self-disclosure. However, the structural path analysis indicates that marital self-disclosure does not significantly mediate this relationship. This non-significant effect contributes theoretically to the understanding that marital self-disclosure does not always determine marital satisfaction. Instead, these findings highlight that a couple's interpersonal communication have a noticeable effect on marital satisfaction, without necessarily depending on self-disclosure as a stage that every couple must endure in a marriage. Besides, it is crucial to consider the appropriateness of marital self-disclosure.

Keywords

interpersonal communication; marital communication; marital satisfaction; marital self-disclosure; structural equation modelling

Corresponding Author

Hindina Maulida

Universitas Tidar, Indonesia; hindina@untidar.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The expectations for marital satisfaction among couples are at an all-time high, amidst the declining marriage rates in Indonesia and the dominance of the digital discourse 'marriage is scary'. Marital satisfaction becomes an important parameter because marriage is a lifelong commitment that involves a thorough decision-making process by each individual. Marital satisfaction is an individual's subjective assessment of the quality and state of their marriage (Graham et al., 2011). Marital satisfaction is reflected in the levels of happiness, fulfilment, and joy that a person experiences in their marriage, which are important indications of the relationship's health and stability (Monson et al., 2004; Whisman et al., 2011). There are various factors associated with marital satisfaction, namely economic factors, (Archuleta et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2021), educational attainment (Effati-Daryani et al., 2020; Fan et al., 2021), mental health of individuals and couple (Escribà-Agüir & Artazcoz, 2011; Whisman et al., 2011)



whether due to work factors, life events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Agyapong et al., 2022; Cheung & Yip, 2015; Effati-Daryani et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020) or during transition to parenthood (Escribà-Agüir & Artazcoz, 2011; Garthus-Niegel et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Archuleta et al. (2011), Effati-Daryani et al. (2020), and Wang et al. (2021) added that marital satisfaction was influenced by low levels of family conflict and social support from one's partner. Sexual satisfaction is also a determining factor in marital satisfaction, as sexual dysfunction or issues negatively impact the quality of the marriage (Boquiren et al., 2016; Schover et al., 2012).

Earlier researchers have formulated various measures to assess marital satisfaction, the oldest is Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment (LWMAT) with 15 items scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) as the most used measures in the literature the most used measures in the literature (Spanier, 1976), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) with 6 items measurement (Graham et al., 2011; Stafford, 2011), Relationship Assessment Scale with 7 items measurement (Hendrick et al., 1998), Quality of Marriage Index (QMI) with 6 items measurement (Norton, 1983), Enrich marital Satisfaction Scale with 15 item measurement (Fowers & Olson, 1993), Satisfaction with Married Life (SWML scale) with 5 item measurement (Ward et al., 2009).

Marital satisfaction is dynamic state that fluctuates over the duration of a marriage (McDaniel et al., 2012; Whisman et al., 2011). Among other factors, marital satisfaction is determined by the quality of communication with one's partner. Quality communication is essential for establishing and maintaining mutual understanding within a marriage through interpersonal, transactional and symbolic processes (Santri et al., 2022). Effective interaction is probable as a consequence of high-quality communication, while poor-quality communication suggests ineffective communication. This is in line with the claim of Manullang (2021) that the quality of interpersonal communication between partners is inextricably linked to development of a harmonious relationship.

Interpersonal communication functions as the foundation of the marital dynamics. It is an essential medium for couples to share support, manage conflict and build intimacy (Sathyamurthy et al., 2024). The transmission of information in interpersonal communication occurs through verbal and non-verbal messages, enabling the sender and receiver to reach mutual understanding through feedback, whether in face-to-face interactions or via technology-mediated channels (Manusov, 2020). In marriage, interpersonal communication can be defined as the reciprocal exchange of information between husband and wife. Interpersonal communication within marriage manifests in multiple facets of domestic existence, including discussions regarding the family's financial needs, financial management, the division of roles and responsibilities, and the sharing of feelings and experiences, either happiness or sadness, between spouses.

Ward et al. (2009) argued that sharing of thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences in interpersonal communication is the foundation for building intimacy. Manusov (2020) asserted that intimacy encompasses experiences derived from the process of sharing intimate and the continual discussion of intimate topics. Intimacy within a marriage transcends a mere sexual relationship, focusing instead on the couple's openness and their subsequent acts. Coffelt & Hess (2014) mentioned that intimacy is a manifestation of high-quality communication in marriage, which strengthens emotional bonds. High-quality interpersonal communication is consistently associated with greater marital satisfaction (Falconier et al., 2015).

On the contrary, destructive communication behaviors, such as criticizing, blaming, complaining, threatening and punishing, are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction and trust (Carroll et al., 2013; Wijnberg-Williams et al., 2015). Manne et al. (2021) elaborated that detrimental communication

and attempts to conceal concerns correlate with lower relationship satisfaction and higher levels of depressive symptoms. Research conducted by Paramita & Suarya (2018) on middle-aged women in Denpasar found that interpersonal communication plays a significant role in marital satisfaction. These findings suggest that improved communication quality between couples correlates with increased marital satisfaction.

Comparable finding was reported by Julianingsih et al. (2023) and Harahap & Lestari (2018) that investigate married employees, revealing a substantial correlation between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction. Interpersonal communication is recognized as a crucial element contributing to the marital satisfaction among participant of the study. Interpersonal communication helps couples managing conflict and harmonizing their work and family roles, thus having a positive impact on marital satisfaction. Laurenceau et al. (1998) explained the way communication functions influences satisfaction by creating a supportive environment for marital expression, such as sharing of deep personal thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Marital self-disclosure is a conscious and intentional process of interpersonal communication when one or both individuals in a marital relationship share personal and emotionally meaningful information, thoughts, feelings, experiences (Luo & Hancock, 2020). Greene et al. (2006) characterizes self-disclosure as a purposeful act of revealing personal information with a partner, which fosters intimacy, trust and relational cohesion. Marital self-disclosure is essential for fostering intimacy, as it facilitates mutual understanding, openness and emotional closeness between spouses (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2018). Marital self-disclosure often involves sharing distressing information, such as worries, fears or life obstacles, to seek emotional support and collaborative problem-solving from a partner (Du et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2024; Tang et al., 2022).

Falconier et al. (2015) argued that revealing suffering in marital self-disclosure facilitates effective mutual support or dyadic coping, which also acts as a mechanism for alleviating psychological burden through emotional sharing. Rehman et al. (2011) asserts that marital self-disclosure serve as a mechanism of self-validation that strengthens acceptance and relational satisfaction. The rationale is that when disclosure elicits a favorable response, it transforms individual psychological resources, like gratitude, into an enhanced relationship quality, which encompasses an increased ability to forgive (Kane et al., 2014). The attitudes of active listening, openness and sincerity immediately cultivate trust and psychological security within a relationship, allowing each partner feels accepted and valued (Fensi, 2018).

Open and effective communication creates space for partners to understand each other's emotional states, expectations and needs, thus building emotional intimacy, trust and a harmonious relationship. This secure atmosphere encourages a higher level of self-disclosure, as individuals possess the confidence to exhibit vulnerability without fear of rejection. A safe environment is characterized by reciprocal assistance, empathy and responsiveness, which foster trust and the courage to open up. Heightened self-disclosure directly contributes to greater marital satisfaction, as empirically demonstrated by study on couples who married through ta'aruf, where self-disclosure significantly influenced their marital happiness (Sakinah & Kinanthi, 2018).

Pan et al. (2024) and Sharabi & Dorrance-Hall (2024) outline that deep self-disclosure is correlates with elevated of marital satisfaction and a stronger sense of intimacy, as well as an increased capacity for conflict resolution. A supportive environment promotes self-disclosure, but a destructive communication environment hinders it. Barry et al. (2019) demonstrates that destructive communication behaviors worsen an individual's psychological well-being in a relational context. As

an illustration, destructive communication behavior such as mutual avoidance or the demand-withdraw pattern have been linked to low marital satisfaction (Salazar, 2015; Zarei & Sanaeimanesh, 2014). These patterns create an unsafe environment for self-disclosure, hindering the flow of emotions and intimate understanding.

Putra et al. (2024) believes that relational factors including as trust, comfort and the feeling of being understood by the conversation partner, as key characteristics of effective interpersonal communication, influence self-disclosure. Inhibiting factors include rejection anxiety, self-esteem, and attachment style. High rejection anxiety and avoidant attachment associated with lower self-disclosure (Saffarinia et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024). Social stigma, geographical distance, socio-economic status, and chronic health illnesses like cancer and HIV can significantly modify self-disclosure patterns. Self-disclosure can be complicated by fear, burden, and the need for support in health situations (Erio et al., 2024; Pan et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024).

Self-disclosure is part of the interpersonal communication and influenced by context and quality of interaction, showing a reciprocal relationship (Loisa & Setyanto, 2014). This study shows that interpersonal communication and self-disclosure are interrelated, making it a factor that facilitates self-disclosure. Meanwhile, research by Harahap (2018) found that self-disclosure is positively and significantly associated with marital satisfaction, contributing significantly to couple satisfaction variation experienced. Similar finding suggested by Rostati & Hatta (2012) who demonstrated that self-disclosure has a positive effect on marital satisfaction among long-distance couples. Furthermore, Wardhani (2012) revealed that level of self-disclosure by partners, from oneself or one's partner, is significantly associated with marital satisfaction.

Deeper and more positive self-disclosure between partners increase the level of marital satisfaction (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2018). Consistent results were demonstrated by Quek & Fitzpatrick (2013) who discovered that self-disclosure is one of the primary predictors of marital satisfaction among husbands and wives. Bader (2023) extended that long-distance military wives who self-disclose had greater relationship harmony. As described by Coffelt & Hess (2014) that voluntary disclosure of personal information with a partner elevate intimacy and marital relationship. These findings confirm that self-disclosure directly affects marital satisfaction

Despite extensive research examining the relationship between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction, a critical gap remains. Previous literature has predominantly established a direct pathway between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction (Laurenceau et al., 1998; S. Harahap & Lestari, 2018; Wardani et al., 2019; Julianingsih et al., 2023), although studies have found a weak or non-directional relationship (Dellaroza & Kusumiati, 2024; Lavner et al., 2016). These diverse findings suggest that the relationship between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction is not always directly related. The specific mediating processes by which this influence operates remain largely unexplored, although there are theoretical suggestions that intimate self-disclosure may be a critical mechanism relating interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial to explore other variables as mediators to get a comprehensive understanding.

The novelty of this research is to integrate previous findings to argue that marital self-disclosure is not merely the result of good interpersonal communication, but rather a critical mediator that promote the positive outcome of interpersonal communication into marital satisfaction. The underlying premise is that marital happiness is not directly caused by good interpersonal communication, but by the mutual trust it creates, which allows couples to disclose each other. According to Graham et al. (2011) self-disclosure facilitates positive communicative interactions transformation into deeper emotional

intimacy and marital satisfaction. Marital self-disclosure has been identified as a key factor in marital quality, however, not much work examining its role as a mediating variable between interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction. Based on this premise, this study aims to investigate how interpersonal communication influences marital satisfaction, with marital self-disclosure as a mediator.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, and a cross-sectional design. While experimental manipulation was not applied at any stage of the research (Hayes, 2018), cross-sectional framework was selected to examine the extent to which interpersonal communication influences marital satisfaction, with marital self-disclosure as a mediator. A cross-sectional approach enabled data collected at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study used convenience sampling to obtain respondents who meet the criterion due to ease of access, willingness and voluntary involvement (Etikan et al., 2016). The primary criterion established for the study's respondent was that they must be married, ensuring the possess the relevant experiences required to investigate. Data collection was carried out online. Prior to completing the form, respondents were provided with an informed consent to ensure that those involved met the criteria and were willing to provide answers in accordance with the statements provided. The informed consent served to explain the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of responses, the anonymity of respondents, and the right to withdraw from the study.

Data were collected using three research instruments, namely the Interpersonal Communication (IPC), Marital Satisfaction (MAS) and Marital Self-Disclosure (MSD) scales. All items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). All original research instruments were translated directly from English into Indonesian. To ensure contextual accuracy, editorial and linguistic revisions were made to item MSD5 and item MAS13. General terminology used in the IPC, MSD and MAS instruments, such as 'stranger', 'other', 'people' and 'my partner', was adapted to 'my spouse' to make it more relevant to the research context of marital relationships. Item MSD2 and Item MSD8 were reworded from negative to positive to improve respondents' understanding and prevent biased responses. Interpersonal Communication (IPC) was measured using six (6) items proposed by Campbell & ATAŞ (2016). Marital Self-Disclosure (MSD) was assessed using nine (9) items by Rosenfeld & Bowen (1991) previously adapted from the 'Personal Report of Spouse Communication Apprehension' questionnaire by Powers and Hutchinson (1979). Item MSD2 "*I am hesitant to develop a 'deep' conversation with my spouse*" became "*I don't hesitant to develop a 'deep' conversation with my spouse*". Item MSD8, "*Even in casual conversations with my spouse, I feel I must guard what I say*" was changed to "*Even in casual conversations with my spouse, I feel free to say whatever is on my mind*". Item MSD5 "*Usually I try to work out problems myself instead of talking them over with my spouse*" was adjusted to "*Usually I try to talk problems over with my spouse instead of working them out myself*".

The Marital Satisfaction (MAS) scale comprises 17 statements, with 16 items drawn from the scale proposed by oleh Lazarus (2006), and one additional item from Fowers & Olson (1993). To maintain construct validity and the universal applicability of the instrument across the sample, given that not all respondents have children, item MAS13 "*I am Pleased with the kind of parent my spouse/partner is (if you have no children, rate your level of satisfaction about this fact)*" was changed and simplified to "*I am confident and Pleased with my spouse's ability to be a good parent*".

One (1) additional item, MAS10 "*I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage*" was adapted from the Enrich Marital Satisfaction scale by Fowers & Olson (1993). The

inclusion of this measurement item aims to capture the reality of marital dynamics, particularly in dual-earner marriages, which are not specifically accommodated in the original 16 items by Lazarus (2006). The division of domestic duties is one of determinants in marital satisfaction. Couples will experience a better sense of balance and stronger marital satisfaction, when responsibilities are shared in a manner that is perceived as fair and discussed openly (Carlson et al., 2020; Qian & Sayer, 2016; Tartakovsky, 2023; Wilkie et al., 1998).

A pilot study involving 15 respondents was conducted to verify the validity of the questionnaire's presentation and readability. For the purposes of reporting the manuscript, the questionnaire in Indonesian was retranslated into English by the research team using an iterative consensus approach, to ensure that the semantic equivalence, conceptual integrity and original intent of each item were fully preserved.

Table 1. Items Measurement

Construct	Observed Variable	Items Measurement	References
Interpersonal Communication	IPC1	I encourage my spouse to tell me how he/she feels	Campbell & ATAŞ (2016)
	IPC2	My spouse tells me that I am easy to talk to	
	IPC3	My spouse often approaches and starts talking to me	
	IPC4	My spouse tells me I am a good listener	
	IPC5	I am honest with my spouse about my thoughts and feelings	
	IPC6	I believe that communication will be productive	
	IPC7	I use examples to help me explain what I am talking about	
Marital Self Disclosure	MSD1	I don't hesitate to tell my spouse exactly how I feel	Rosenfeld & Bowen (1991)
	MSD2	I don't hesitant to develop a 'deep' conversation with my spouse	
	MSD3	I look forward to expressing my opinion to my spouse on controversial topics	
	MSD4	I look forward to evening talks with my spouse	
	MSD5	Usually I try to talk problems over with my spouse instead of working them out myself	
	MSD6	I usually come right out and tell my spouse exactly what I mean	
	MSD7	I never hesitate to tell my spouse my needs	
	MSD8	Even in casual conversations with my spouse, I feel free to say whatever is on my mind	
	MSD9	I feel I am an open communicator in my marriage	
Marital Satisfaction	MAS1	I am pleased with the amount we talk to each other	Fowers & Olson (1993) and Lazarus (2006)
	MAS2	I am pleased with the quality of our communication (e.g., pleasant, constructive, vs. insensitive, hostile, etc.)	
	MAS3	I am of the opinion that my spouse is "on my team"	
	MAS4	I am able to trust what my spouse says and does	
	MAS5	I am content with degree of affection that is given and received.	
	MAS6	I am satisfied with our sex life	
	MAS7	I am satisfied with the way we are spending/managing money	
	MAS8	I am pleased with our leisure time together (e.g., vacations, sports, outings, etc.)	
	MAS9	I am satisfied with the amount of time we spend together	
	MAS10	I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage	

MAS11	I am basically in agreement with my spouse's outlook on life (e.g., values, religious beliefs, political ideas, etc.)
MAS12	I am content about my spouse's smoking, drinking, or other habits
MAS13	I am confident and Pleased with my spouse's ability to be a good parent
MAS14	I am pleased with my relationship (s) with members of my spouse's family (e.g., his or her parents, siblings, and other relatives)
MAS15	I am pleased with the way my spouse relates to members of my own family (i.e., your parents, siblings, etc.)
MAS16	I am happy with our social life and friends we share in common.
MAS17	I am pleased with my spouse's overall appearance

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM is a comprehensive approach to multivariate statistical analysis, integrating both measurement and structural components, simultaneously examining the relationships between each variable in the conceptual model. A defining of multivariate analysis is its engagement three or more variables (Hair et al., 2019).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 2. The respondents were predominantly female (61.3%), with male participant represented (38.7) %. Regarding the age group, the highest percentage of respondents fell into (29-44) age group (60.9%), followed by (45-60) age group (24.4%), while those aged (18-28) and (61-79), accounted for (11.6%) and (3.1%), respectively. Concerning the length of marriage, the majority of respondents had been married for more than 16 years (37.3%), with (29.8%) reporting a marriage duration of (9-15 years), (21.3%) for (4-8 years), and the remaining (11.6%) having been married for (0-3 years).

Table 2. Demographic Profile Respondents

	Item	N	%
Sex	Female	138	61.3
	Male	87	38.7
Total		225	100.0
Age Group	18-28	26	11.6
	29-44	137	60.9
	45-60	55	24.4
	61-79	7	3.1
Total		225	100.0
Marital Duration	0-3 Years	26	11.6
	4-8 Years	48	21.3
	9-15 Years	67	29.8
	16+ Years	84	37.3
Total		225	100.0

PLS-SEM was employed to evaluate the measurement and structural models in order to determine construct quality, convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity. The criteria used refer to the standards set out in the literature (Hair et al., 2019; Kock, 2014), outer loading > 0.70 , composite reliability (CR) > 0.70 , Cronbach Alpha > 0.70 , average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.50 , and full collinearity $VIF < 5.0$. Table 2 shows that all constructs met the recommended criteria. The VIF values ranged from 2.050 to 3.237, indicating that these values are in line with the recommended benchmark for PLS-SEM models, 3.3 (Kock, 2014). These values indicate that the constructs analyzed do not exhibit multicollinearity and confirm the validity of the structural estimation results.

Before evaluating the reliability and validity of the constructs, several indicators with low outer loadings in the initial measurement model were identified to improve the reliability and fit of the model. Several items, such as IPC3 (0.548), MAS12 (0.635), MAS17 (0.615) and MSD4 (0.642), each had loadings < 0.70 . However, the CR and AVE values for each construct remained above the set thresholds, which are considered good indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Consequently, these items were retained. Furthermore, all four capture substantive dimensions consistent with the referenced instruments, meaning their removal could compromise content validity. These four items complement the dimensions and render them theoretically relevant in measuring the construct.

One additional MAS 10 item, adapted from the Enrich Marital Satisfaction by Fowers & Olson (1993) demonstrated convergent validity with an outer loading value of 0.711. This value exceeds the ideal threshold for outer loading of > 0.70 . These results confirm that the additional item integrates well and is statistically valid and consistent in representing the construct being measured. The construct of item MAS13 was modified so that it would not need to be filtered out during the questionnaire data collection process, as not all couples have children, and to avoid confusion amongst respondents when completing the questionnaire. The results of the measurement model evaluation show that the modified item has a strong outer loading value of 0.771 (loading > 0.70), indicating that this item is valid in measuring the construct of Marital Satisfaction.

Table 3 shows that the results of the measurement model evaluation for Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.858 to 0.959 and composite reliability values ranged from 0.893 to 0.963. These figures are well above the threshold of 0.70, meaning that the reliability of the measured constructs is good. These results indicate that the set of indicators for each construct consistently measures their respective latent variables. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is above the criterion of 0.50 (Table 3). Thus, each construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators, indicating adequate convergent validity. Combined with strong indicator loadings, the AVE results support the notion that the constructs in the measurement model capture the intended concepts and function well for married couples in Indonesia.

Table 3. Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Item	Loading	CR	Cronbach's	AVE	Full Collinearity VIFs
IPC1	0.771	0.893	0.858	0.549	2.050
IPC2	0.844				
IPC3	0.548				
IPC4	0.837				
IPC6	0.809				
IPC7	0.707				
MAS1	0.870	0.963	0.959	0.608	3.237
MAS2	0.851				
MAS3	0.836				

MAS4	0.813				
MAS5	0.850				
MAS6	0.830				
MAS7	0.847				
MAS8	0.702				
MAS9	0.780				
MAS10	0.711				
MAS11	0.811				
MAS12	0.635				
MAS13	0.771				
MAS14	0.729				
MAS15	0.781				
MAS16	0.767				
MAS17	0.615				
MSD1	0.782	0.944	0.932	0.652	2.900
MSD2	0.872				
MSD3	0.835				
MSD4	0.642				
MSD5	0.772				
MSD6	0.827				
MSD7	0.853				
MSD8	0.853				
MSD9	0.808				

Discriminant validity implies that the constructs within the measurement model are not interrelated (Chin, 2010). Discriminant validity is realized when model constructs are distinct and do not overlap with one another in terms of the dimensions being measured. To meet the criteria for discriminant validity, a construct must explain its indicators more strongly than its relationship with other constructs (Lim, 2024). In other words, the square root of the AVE must be greater than the correlation with other constructs (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011; Kock, 2014). The AVE indicates the proportion of indicator variance explained by the construct, whilst the square root of the AVE serves as a measure of the strength of the relationship between the construct and its indicators. Table 4 shows that the criteria for discriminant validity are met in accordance with the established standards.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	IPC	MAS	MSD
IPC	0.741		
MAS	0.776	0.78	
MSD	0.874	0.726	0.807

To evaluate a structural model, there are two initial criteria that must be considered including the significance of the path coefficients and the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous construct. Each hypothesis in the structural model represents a causal relationship between two constructs, hence path coefficients and p-values are calculated for each relationship. Whilst the path coefficients must be significant, the value of R^2 is heavily influenced by the field of research. Chin (1998) suggests that R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 can be categorized as substantial, moderate and weak.

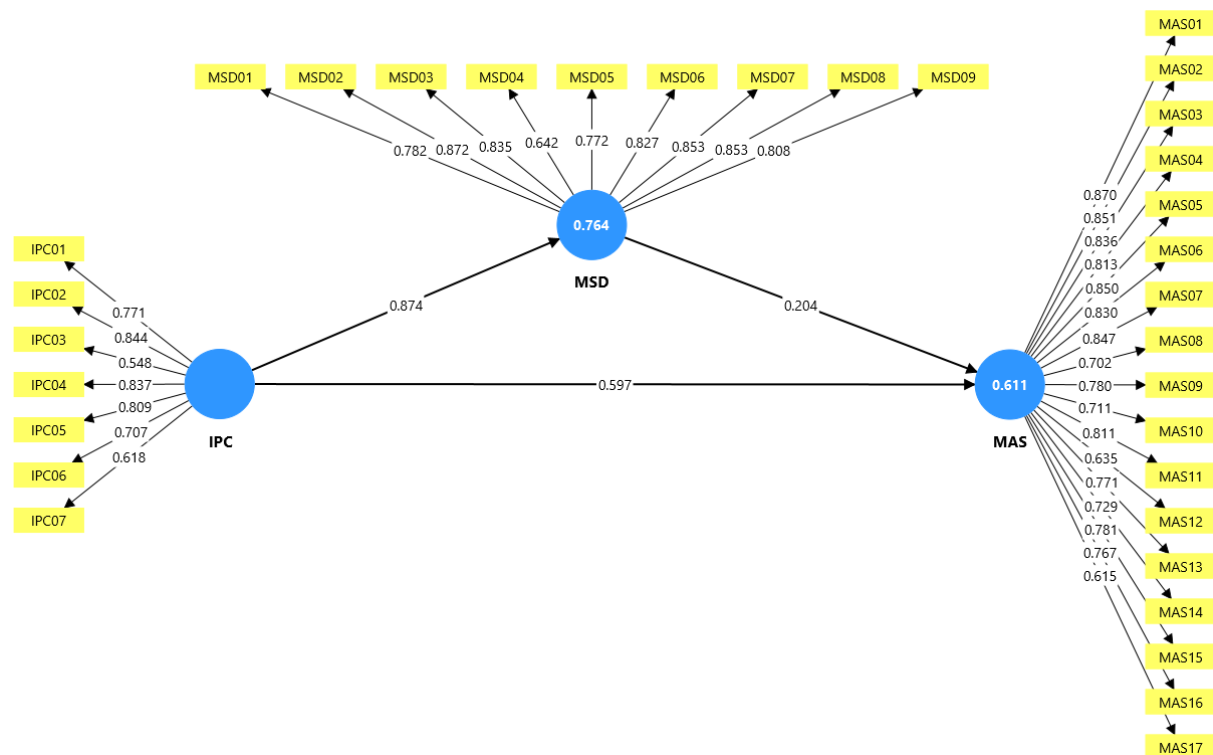


Figure 1. Structure Model Analysis

Figure 1 shows the results of the structural model with standardized path coefficients (β) and their significance levels. This model explains a substantial amount of variance in the main outcomes, with R^2 values for the marital self-disclosure and marital satisfaction constructs being 0.764 and 0.611. This indicates that the predictors explain 76 per cent and 61 per cent of the variance in marital self-disclosure and marital satisfaction, which represents substantial explanatory power in the context of interpersonal communication behavior.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Result

	Hypothesis	β	p	Decision
H1	IPC->MAS	0.597	0.000	Supported
H2	IPC->MSD	0.874	0.000	Supported
H3	MSD->MAS	0.204	0.068	Not Supported
H4	IPC->MSD->MAS	0.178	0.070	Not Supported

Based on the hypothesis testing result, interpersonal communication (IPC) showed a strong positive effect on marital satisfaction (MAS) ($\beta = 0.597$), thereby supporting H1. A significant positive effect was observed for interpersonal communication on marital self-disclosure ($\beta = 0.874$), which supports H2. These findings indicate that better interpersonal communication amongst married couples impacts on greater marital satisfaction, and marital self-disclosure compared with those who have poor or inadequate interpersonal communication. On the other hand, the effect of marital self-disclosure (MSD) on marital satisfaction (MAS) did not reach the level of significance, although the path coefficient showed a positive direction ($\beta = 0.204$). As a result, H3 is not supported in this study. In other words, self-disclosure by partners does not determine marital satisfaction within the context of this study's sample.

The mediating effect of marital self-disclosure and marital satisfaction was not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (indirect $\beta = 0.178$). In short, although interpersonal

communication influences marital self-disclosure and interpersonal communication in turn positively influences marital satisfaction, the mediating path from interpersonal communication to marital satisfaction through marital self-disclosure was very weak and did not reach the level of significance. Therefore, H4 is not supported. No evidence showed that good interpersonal communication leads to greater marital satisfaction through marital self-disclosure. Thus, interpersonal communication influences marital satisfaction directly, without marital self-disclosure mechanism in this study.

3.2. Discussion

This study examines how interpersonal communication influences marital satisfaction, whilst exploring the mediating effect of marital self-disclosure on this relationship. The results offer a new perspective on the dynamics of interpersonal communication in marital relationships, which underpin the quality of interpersonal relationships in a romantic context. The positive influence of interpersonal communication on marital satisfaction suggests that marital satisfaction achieved when effective communication is existed. Lavner et al., (2016) and Dakowicz & Dakowicz (2021) state that the quality of interpersonal communication is associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction. This support prior evidence suggesting interpersonal communication increase relationship satisfaction (Falconier et al., 2015; Mallory, 2022; Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2016)

Marital satisfaction is an individual's subjective assessment of the state and quality of a marital relationship. As a key of the relationship's health and stability, it is measured by a fulfilment of needs, joy and happiness in marriage (Monson et al., 2004; Whisman et al., 2011). Marital satisfaction, according to Litzinger & Gordon (2005), is based on good communication. Vazhappilly & Reyes (2016) noted that communication helps couples to understand each other's personalities, strengths and weaknesses, which strengthen their romantic bond. However, destructive communication patterns, such as criticizing, blaming or threatening, are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction (Carroll et al., 2013; Wijnberg-Williams et al., 2015).

This study also demonstrates that interpersonal communication is a positive and significant predictor of self-disclosure within marriage. This indicates that good interpersonal communication with one's partner is associated with high levels of marital self-disclosure. The positive influence of interpersonal communication on marital self-disclosure is consistent with theoretical perspectives on relationship development. It asserts that effective communication creates an environment where partner may share personal thoughts and feelings. This supports hypothesis H2. It aligned with Fadhlani et al. (2023) conclusion that interpersonal communication, characterized by openness, empathy, support, a positive attitude and equality, influences the level of self-disclosure.

Social penetration theory proposed by Altman & Taylor (1973) explains that warm and mutually supportive communication creates a safe environment for partners to disclose. Putra et al. (2024) confirms that self-disclosure in interpersonal communication is influenced by relational factors such as trust, comfort, and the perception of being understood by partner. Marital self-disclosure is an intentional and voluntary process of interpersonal communication where one or both partners in a marital relationship share personal and emotional information, thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Luo & Hancock, 2020). Self-disclosure indicates that partners who engage in open and effective communication are more likely to share information each other. This aligns with studies showing that high-quality communication enhances emotional intimacy and the willingness to engage in marital self-disclosure (Emmers-Sommer, 2004).

The most interesting finding is that marital self-disclosure has no effect on marital satisfaction,

therefore, H3 is rejected. These results contradict previous studies which found that self-disclosure is a key predictor of marital satisfaction (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2018; N. Harahap, 2018; Manullang, 2021). Constructive self-disclosure among partners increases marital satisfaction by making social support clear, smooth and aligned with its need. In other words, self-disclosure may not be sufficient to strengthen marital satisfaction (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2018), as noted in Poucher et al. (2022) that high levels of self-disclosure that are not accompanied by understanding will not provide positive outcomes.

There are at least two possible explanations for these findings. First, the effect of self-disclosure on marital satisfaction may be moderated by the partner's responsiveness. Laurenceau et al. (1998) demonstrated that self-disclosure only enhances intimacy when met with support and understanding. If the partner responds critically or indifferently, self-disclosure may decrease satisfaction. This study sample did not measure partners' responsiveness, therefore cannot be predicted. Second, the sample was mostly women and had long-term marriages (> 16 years), which may have contributed. Self-disclosure is no longer a determining factor in satisfaction, as partner may already have profound understanding of one another. Instead, other factors, such as commitment, conflict management, or sexual intimacy may become more influential (Carstensen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the exact underlying factors cannot yet be determined as they were not examined in this study.

The hypothesized mediating effect (H4) showed that the effect of interpersonal communication on marital satisfaction was not significantly influenced by marital self-disclosure. These finding offer significant theoretical insights, marital satisfaction directly influenced by interpersonal communication. However, this effect does not seem to be primarily mediated by marital self-disclosure. This implies that marital satisfaction arises beyond factors related to marital self-disclosure, such as an increased sense of being understood, acknowledged, or emotionally supported (Poucher et al., 2022). As previously mentioned in the context of comparable research, the quality and authenticity of communication are crucial, which involves sharing of in-depth personal information, advantageous for couple. It results on better coordination, reduced conflict and increased mutual understanding (Laurenceau et al., 2005).

Another possible explanation is that the direct effect of interpersonal communication on marital satisfaction may have accounted for much of the variance, leaving little room for marital self-disclosure to contribute. This suggests that although self-disclosure occurs within marriage, it does not transform this aspect into a deeper sense of satisfaction, which may require additional factors beyond self-disclosure itself. However, the precise underlying factors remain unclear as they were not investigated in this study.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical insights into how interpersonal communication shapes fundamental relationship outcomes in marriage, particularly regarding marital satisfaction and self-disclosure within marriage. The findings suggest that interpersonal communication directly influences marital satisfaction and encourages self-disclosure with one's partner in marriage. However, the results of this study contradict the initial hypothesis, which stated that interpersonal communication influences marital satisfaction through marital self-disclosure. The empirical data reveal that interpersonal communication does not influence marital satisfaction through indirect pathway marital self-disclosure. The implication of these findings is that the communication process in marriage does not always proceed sequentially. These empirical results support the relational perspective, which regards the quality of interpersonal communication and marital self-disclosure as distinct mechanisms operating in parallel. In practical terms, these findings imply that effective interpersonal communication in a couple

have a tangible impact on relationship satisfaction, without relying on self-disclosure as a typical marital stage.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that allow future research. First, the cross-sectional design cannot prove causal relationship since it cannot track changes over time, with data collected at a single point in time. To strengthen future studies, a longitudinal or experimental design should be used to examine how interpersonal communication, marital self-disclosure, and marital satisfaction change over a specific period of time. A mixed-methods approach may produce richer and more reliable findings to overcome these constraints. Second, convenience sample may reduce generalizability, therefore the acquired data is hard to generalize to the population. Future research should employ sampling techniques that allow for generalization.

Third, the data were collected via self-reporting, which raises concerns about methodological bias. Future studies could mitigate this by collecting data using a dyadic design, collecting data from both partners independently. A qualitative approach could also be used to provide subjective insights that surveys cannot. Fourth, this study did not include various potential control variables in the model, for example, personality traits, attachment styles, relationship duration, demographic data or socio-economic factors. These variables significantly affect marital satisfaction and this needs further study.

Fifth, social desirability and response bias. Respondents may provide answers based on their idealized expectations rather than actual circumstances, for fear of being criticized by their partner or others. For instance, respondents may report higher levels of satisfaction regarding agreements on money management than the actual situations. To address these limitations, the questionnaire stated that responses were anonymous, no personal information was recorded and that result would only be used for scientific research.

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