

# Staying in Marriage is Not Enough: Influence of Marital Commitment and Adult Attachment Style on Marital Flourishing

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to determine the influence of marital commitment and adult attachment style on the quality of marriage, specifically the marital flourishing of married young adults. In addition, the research participants were 263 respondents that were obtained using the Convenience Sampling technique, with the criteria young adult, (20-40 years old), married for at least 2 months, and living on Java Island. The instruments that were used were the Relationship Flourishing Scale (RFS), Marital Commitment Inventory (MCI), and Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ). The results showed that marital commitment ( $p = .000$ ) and a secure attachment style ( $p = .000$ ) significantly predict marital flourishing. Meanwhile, the fearful ( $p=.09$ ), preoccupied ( $p=.78$ ), and dismissing ( $p=.81$ ) attachment styles do not influence marital flourishing. This study concludes that young adults who develop secure attachment patterns and a strong sense of marital commitment are more likely to experience high-quality marriages.

**Keywords:** Marital flourishing; marital commitment; adult attachment style, young adult

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## Introduction

Marriage is a sacred union that is expected to offer happiness to couples. Previous research has shown that a fulfilling marriage can improve the quality of life and can be of great benefit to couples (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005, Robles, 2014; Aurellia & Arjadi, 2023). The goals of marriage and its expected benefits have shifted throughout history (Finkel et al., 2014). From the 1700s to 1850, couples went into marriage as a team for practical reasons and the sharing of economic benefits such as housing, resources, and financial responsibilities to achieve a better life. And between 1850 to 1965, reasons for marriage shifted toward love and fulfilling emotional intimacy. In the modern era (1965-present), marriage has become a means for self-expression and personal growth (Finkel et al., 2015).

Recent studies on marriage have shifted their focus to marital quality and satisfaction (Fahd & Hanif, 2019). The concept of marital quality goes beyond merely settling arguments or concerns in marriage. It focuses on marriages that not only survive but also provide happiness and growth opportunities for the

individuals involved, hence reducing the likelihood of divorce.

One arising concept that describes optimal marital quality is marital flourishing (Fahd & Hanif, 2019). This concept originates from Positive Psychology, which emphasizes the role of relationships and how to maintain these roles in a stable and continuously positive direction (flourishing relationship) to achieve genuine happiness (Sari, 2021).

Marital flourishing is a situation in marriage where couples consistently collaborate to achieve meaningful goals and have a significant degree of success in attaining them (Fowers & Owenz, 2010). The term flourishing comes from Aristotle's concept of "eudaimonia," which explores happiness and well-being beyond mere, satisfaction, and adjustment (Nurhayati, 2016). It also refers to an emotionally significant relationship characterized by intimacy, growth, resilience, positive experiences, and a dynamic balance in marital relations and other family subsystems. Marital flourishing also focuses on social engagement and involvement in the community where the relationship exists (Fincham & Beach, 2010).

A marriage is said to be flourishing when spouses engage in meaningful activities together (Fowers & Owenz, 2010). They can pursue other valuable goals, such as raising children into responsible adults, improving literacy, practicing religion, education, and community involvement. Achieving these goals involves extensive teamwork, which strengthens the couple's bond, deepens their shared experience and efforts, increases the chances of success, and enhances individual development within the marriage (Fowers & Owenz, 2010).

In the concept of marital flourishing, marital quality has a broad spectrum, ranging from dissatisfaction to satisfaction, including a range from destructive or harmful to gentle or constructive and from satisfaction to flourishing (Fowers & Owenz, 2010). Furthermore, there is more research on marital quality than marital flourishing as a higher marital quality. Several factors significantly predict marital flourishing, such as emotion regulation (Insan & Rosdiyati, 2022), negative expression of emotions, and positive communal orientation. (Fahd & Hanif, 2019), also marriage readiness and marriage adjustments (Mustika & Herawati, 2022).

Besides the several factors mentioned previously, one study examined marital commitment and its influence on marital quality (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). Marital commitment is a source of strength for married couples and a factor that predicts marital satisfaction (Lioe, 2023). It consists of three different types of commitment experiences namely, personal, structural, and moral (Johnson et al., 1999). Personal commitment is the desire to remain in a relationship moral commitment is the sense of obligation to stay and structural commitment is the sense of being limited or having trouble quitting a relationship (Lioe, 2023). On the other hand, the concept of commitment comes from a global obligation. It directly shows the level of commitment, such as "How committed are you to this relationship?" (Johnson et al., 1999).

In addition to marital commitment, adult attachment also affects marital satisfaction. Attachment can predict marital functioning (Gallo & Smith, 2001) regarding whether the marriage is functioning well or not. When couples feel secure, they experience better satisfaction in their marriage and will be better at resolving conflict. Insecure attachment usually results in an inability to handle conflict or achieve satisfaction in marriage (Yahya et al., 2021). However, individuals with secure attachment reflect a solid tendency to maintain and improve the quality of the relationship and well-being of the couple, overcome obstacles in the relationship, restore emotional balance and relationship stability when needed, and encourage the personal development of the couple (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

According to the research shown above, various factors, including marital commitment and adult attachment style, influence marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, there is a need for more research on their impact on marital flourishing, a concept of high-quality marriage that goes beyond marital satisfaction. The high rates of marriage, which range from 1,742,029 marriages to 447,740 divorce cases in Indonesia in 2021 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023), with the highest number occurring on Java Island, provide a compelling justification for examining the quality of marriage in this region. Understanding the factors that contribute to marital flourishing enables the enhancement of marital pleasure while also setting the groundwork for healthier and more resilient marriages. Therefore, this research investigates how marital commitment and adult attachment style influence marital flourishing in Java Island, Indonesia. This research will also assist professionals in developing interventions that promote healthy and fulfilling marriages by equipping couples with the necessary knowledge and skills. In addition, the research will test the following hypotheses:

1. Marital commitment has a significant influence on marital flourishing.
2. Secure adult attachment style has a significant influence on marital flourishing.
3. Fearful adult attachment style has a significant influence on marital flourishing.
4. Preoccupied adult attachment style has a significant influence on marital flourishing.
5. Dismissing adult attachment style has a significant influence on marital flourishing.

## Methods

The research method used is a quantitative method with a survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The independent variables in this research are marital commitment and adult attachment style, which are grouped into secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing types. Consequently, the dependent variable is marital flourishing.

Before distributing the data, the research team conducted a readability test on 10 people who met the respondent criteria. Following this, the team conducted an instrument test on 30 respondents. Moreover, this research has also obtained an ethical review from the KPIN Ethics Review Team (080/2023ETIK/KPIN). The data distribution process was done for two weeks, from September 1st, 2023, to September 14th, 2023.

## Participant

The data collection method was convenience sampling and the questionnaire was distributed online via WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram using Microsoft Forms. The criteria for the participants were as follows:

Young adults between the ages of 20-40 years that are within the stage of young adulthood characterized with establishing intimate relationships and forming a family. Additionally, the participants must have been married for at least 2 months. This is adjusted to the questionnaire items in the Marital Commitment Inventory which refers to the evaluation of the marriage during the last 2 months while living on the island of Java. The research focuses on individuals living on the island of Java due to its highest marriage and divorce rates in Indonesia.

### Research Instruments

The Relationship Flourishing Scale is an adaptation of the instrument developed by Fowers et al. (2016) which consists of 12 items that measure 4 dimensions, namely: Goal Sharing (3 items) with an example item, "My spouse shows interest in things that are important to me". Personal Growth (3 items) with an example item, "Discussing with my spouse helps me to see things from a new perspective". Relational Giving (3 items) with an example item, "I try to celebrate the successes achieved by my spouse". Meaning (3 items) with an example item, "When making important decisions, I think about the good impact it will have on our relationship (me and my spouse)".

The scale translation procedure uses first-round back translation and readability tests. Based on the instrument test results the obtained values were  $\alpha = .917$ , and the overall corrected item-total correlation was above .4 (the range was between .497 to .840). As a result, no items were dropped. Respondents gave a rating of agreement on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for the first four items and a frequency rating of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) for the following eight items.

The Marital Commitment Inventory used in this research is an adaptation of the instrument developed by Johnson et al. (1999) to measure Marital Commitment, which consists of: Personal Commitment: 5 question items with indicators of love represented by 2 items, marital satisfaction by 1 item, and partner identity by 2 items. An example item is "If you divorced your spouse, you would miss the feeling of being a husband/wife." Moral Commitment: 13 question items with indicators of attitude towards divorce as many as 5 items (2 of which are unfavorable items), promises the partner as many as 4 items, and values regarding consistency as many as 4 items. An example item is "When you agree to get married, you are morally bound to maintain the marriage." Structural Commitment: 18 question items with indicators of alternatives represented by 4 items, social pressure by 6 items, divorce procedures by 6 items, and investment by 4 items. An example item is, "If you and your spouse get divorced, you will be uncomfortable because you

will lose your place or position in the social environment."

The scale translation procedure uses first-round back translation and readability tests. Based on the instrument test, the results obtained were  $\alpha = .903$  and the corrected item-total correlation was between .287 to .728. Based on Sufren and Nathanel on Sama (2014), corrected item-total correlation should exceed 0.2 to be considered valid, thus 1 item from personal commitment and 4 items from structural commitment were decided not to be used.

This research uses the Attachment Style Questionnaire from Fitriana and Fitria (2016) to measure Adult Attachment Style. However, the term "orang lain" (other people) is modified to "suami/istri saya" (my spouse) to better align with the context of marriage. For example, the initial item, "I trust other people, and I like it when other people can rely on me," is modified to "I trust my spouse, and I like it when my spouse can rely on me." Based on the instrument test result, the Secure Adult Attachment Style has ( $\alpha = .650$ ) with a corrected item-total correlation between .511 to .774, however, one item below .20 was decided not to be used. The Fearful type had ( $\alpha = .815$ ) with corrected item-total correlation between .563 to .698 and Dismissing type ( $\alpha = .646$ ) with corrected item-total correlation between .339 to .542. However, the Preoccupied type had ( $\alpha = .558$ ) and corrected item-total correlation between .284 to .675, with two items below .20, it was decided not to be used. Subsequently, there are 6 final items to measure the secure type with an example item, "I feel comfortable being in an emotionally close relationship with my spouse," 5 items to measure the fearful type with an example item, "I am careful to get involved in emotionally close relationships because I am afraid of getting hurt," 5 final items to measure the preoccupied type with an example item "I often wonder if my spouse loves me." 5 items to measure the dismissing type with an example item "I prefer my spouse not to depend on me and vice versa."

### Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used to test the hypotheses in this research, is the Generalized Linear Model (GzLM) (Ng & Cribbie, 2017). GzLM models variable relationships without the requirement to fulfill the assumptions of the normal distribution of error or constant variability across predictors levels which is applied in regression analysis (Fox, 2016). The rising use of GzLM in psychological research, the quality of analysis of GzLM is also considerably high since around 86.4% of papers using this analysis were published in first- or second-quartile journals (Bono et al., 2021). Therefore, GzLM is used in this study using SPSS software (Version 26, IBM Corp).

The GzLM was specified with Marital Flourishing as the dependent variable, utilizing a Gamma distribution due to the continuous and positively skewed nature of the data. A logarithmic link function was applied to linearize the relationships and stabilize the variance.

For the model configuration, the Intercept and Main Effects were included. The model featured an intercept to capture the baseline level of Relationship Flourishing, along with the main effects for each independent variable namely, Marital Commitment, Secure Attachment, Fearful Attachment, Preoccupied Attachment, and Dismissing attachment. This setup enabled the assessment of each predictor’s unique contribution to Relationship Flourishing while controlling for other variables. For the Model Validation, manual specification was used to ensure the accurate inclusion of all relevant predictors as main effects. The initial analysis focused on main effects due to their theoretical and empirical relevance, without considering interactions.

**Results and Discussion**

**Result**

The sample in this research consist of 263 participants with the spread across 6 provinces and predominantly from West Java Province (117 participants). Female were also the majority of respondents in this reseach (238 participants).

A Generalized Linear Model (GzLM) with a Gamma distribution and a logarithmic link function was utilized to analyze the impact of attachment styles and marital commitment on marital flourishing. The model significantly explained variance in Marital Flourishing,  $\chi^2(5, N = 263) = 294.90, p < .001$ , indicating a good fit to the data.

As shown in table 3, Marital Commitment significantly predicted Marital Flourishing (B = .00, SE = .00,  $\chi^2 = 13.43, p < .001$ ). Similarly, Secure Attachment Style was a significant predictor for Marital Flourishing (B = .04, SE = .00,  $\chi^2 = 215.08, p < .001$ ). In contrast, Fearful Attachment Style (p >.001), Preoccupied Attachment Style (p >.001), and Dismissing Attachment Style (p >.001), were not significantly associated with Marital Flourishing.

**Discussion**

Marital flourishing is also called a high quality marriage (Nurhayati, 2016). Therefore, the research results related to marital quality are considered to still align with the variable of marital flourishing studied in this research.

The results show that marital commitment significantly affects marital flourishing. This is in line with the research of Saxena and Shah (2011), who found that couples with low dedication and commitment to marriage also show poor marriage

quality. Moreover, this is in line with the results of a research by Lin et al. (2022), which stated that marital commitment and the perception of partner sacrifice significantly affect the quality of marriage. Regarding the perception of sacrifice, this research uses the Relationship Flourishing Scale, one of whose dimensions is relational giving, as a substitute for the term sacrifice. This is because sacrifice is considered to have a negative meaning, namely, the loss of something. At the same time, relational giving is interpreted as a person giving for the partner's good and positively impacting the relationship in the future. Sacrifice or the motivation to prioritize a partner and romantic relationships are characteristics of a quality marriage (Fowers et al., 2016).

Marital commitment not only affects marital flourishing, but also marital stability (Latifa et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to increase marital commitment so couples have a solid foundation for many positive impacts in the family and community (Zaheri et al., 2016). Interestingly, in the research by Bordbari et al. (2022), individual marital commitment can increase because it is influenced by the level of flourishing that the individual has in their life. This means that individuals need to have a level of flourishing within themselves first to achieve marital commitment and marital flourishing in their marriage.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics*

|              | <i>n</i>    |
|--------------|-------------|
| Total sample | 263         |
| Provinces    |             |
| DKI Jakarta  | 44          |
| Banten       | 34          |
| West Java    | 117         |
| Central Java | 22          |
| Yogyakarta   | 22          |
| East Java    | 24          |
| Sex          |             |
| Male         | 25 (9.5%)   |
| Female       | 238 (90.5%) |

**Table 3**  
*GzLM Result*

| Variables              | B    | Std. Error | Wald $\chi^2$ | p-value |
|------------------------|------|------------|---------------|---------|
| (Intercept)            | 2.84 | .08        | 1243.79       | .00     |
| Marital Commitment     | .00  | .00        | 13.43         | .000    |
| Secure Attachment      | .04  | .00        | 215.084       | .000    |
| Fearful Attachment     | -.00 | .00        | 2.903         | .09     |
| Preoccupied Attachment | -.00 | .00        | .075          | .78     |
| Dismissing Attachment  | .00  | .00        | .060          | .81     |

Berman and Sperling in Liu et al. (2020) explain that adult attachment style is the tendency of individuals to seek and maintain attachment objects that can meet a stable sense of security both physically and psychologically. This means that when individuals feel safe and comfortable with their spouse (husband/wife), the potential for their marriage to develop into a higher quality will increase. These results are supported by a research by Yuspendi et al., (2015) that the adult attachment style of both husband and wife has a more significant influence than the personality type variable on the quality of marriage.

Furthermore, secure attachment patterns have a significant effect on marital flourishing in this research. These findings are supported by the results of a research by Amani and Khosroshahi (2020) which found that the secure type of adult attachment pattern has a significant effect both directly and when mediated by the variable of self-compassion on marital quality. Furthermore, Konradus et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of 15 research and found a positive correlation between secure attachment styles and marital quality in married couples. In addition, Scheeren et al. (2014) found that secure attachment, combined with positive conflict resolution techniques, significantly enhanced marital quality. Moreover, Neff and Beretvas (2013) state that individuals with a secure attachment pattern are better able to develop self-compassion better, which in turn impacts the ability to show compassion better towards the partner as well, so that a higher quality marriage can be achieved.

All of the anxious attachment styles in this research did not predict marital flourishing. In contrary, Nobandegani et al. (2021) emphasized that anxious attachment styles can contribute to declining marital quality among married individuals. In addition, Laraesa and Theresa (2022) stated that the fearful type of adult attachment style has a negative effect on marital quality with the most significant contribution, meaning that, the more fearful an individual is, the lower the marital quality that they experience. Referring to dimensions measured in the Relationship Flourishing Scale, namely Goal Sharing, couples share goals both individually and as a couple, allowing them to contribute to each other in the process of achieving them. Individuals with the fearful type will be too afraid to build close emotional relationships with their partner, making it less likely to be open about life goals and the possibility of synergizing to achieve them together becomes less likely to happen.

Moreover, the result of the preoccupied attachment type did not show an effect on marital flourishing in this research. Bartholomew and Horowitz in Liu et al. (2020) explain that the preoccupied type of adult attachment pattern is characterized by a negative self-view (the tendency for

low self-esteem), but others/partners are seen more positively. Hence, they appear dependent and afraid of being abandoned by their partner. Likewise, the research by Edwina et al., (2022) states that self-esteem does not play a direct role in the flourishing of married individuals' relationships.

Similar to the preoccupied type, the dismissing attachment type also showed no direct effect on marital flourishing. This relates to the results of a research by Huang et al., (2020) which found that anxiety-type attachment patterns (another term for preoccupied) and avoidant-type attachment patterns (another term for dismissing) do not show a relationship with marital quality in couples in Thailand. Furthermore, Ghiasi et al. (2024) showed that the higher the levels of anxiety and avoidance, the higher the vulnerability to infidelity in marriage. In addition, Vollmann et al., (2019) found that Individuals with higher levels of dismissing attachment expressed lower levels of gratitude towards their partner. This lack of gratitude, in turn, was linked to a decrease in overall relationship quality. In dating relationships, Andayu et al. (2019) explained that the insecure attachment type has a significant effect on the vulnerability to experience violence. There is a tendency that the effects of the insecure attachment style (fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing types) will be more directly seen in negative aspects of romantic relationships, such as vulnerability to infidelity and violence, compared to positive relationship qualities, such as marital flourishing.

The limitations of this research includes the limited references related to marital flourishing, therefore, the comparative journals used for discussion mostly still use the term marital quality. This makes it challenging to benchmark findings or place them within the context of existing research. This can lead to difficulties in validating results and understanding their significance relative to other research in the field. It also constrains the research's depth and accuracy in interpreting marital flourishing.

Furthermore, the findings of this research regarding fearful attachment diverge from those of previous research. Further in-depth investigations are warranted to establish the precise contribution of fearful attachment to marital flourishing. Additionally, the imbalance in the number of male and female respondents makes it impossible to conduct an in-depth analysis of marital flourishing based on gender.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it concluded that marital commitment and secure attachment style can predict marital flourishing. However, other attachment types which are fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing did not show any influence on marital flourishing. This research enriches the literature by confirming the

importance of the roles of secure attachment and marital commitment in promoting marital flourishing, while also refining the understanding of how different adult attachment styles affect marital flourishing. These insights are valuable for researchers who are working to enhance marital flourishing or other topics related to marriage.

For the practitioners, this research can serve as a references for designing psychoeducation and training programs aimed at developing secure attachment pattern, and increasing marital commitment and flourishing in young adult marriages.

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