

## IMPROVEMENT ON MARITAL SATISFACTION BY USING QUALITY APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

If a product is tangible to be measured then satisfaction is intangible to be measured. It has no quality standard therefore satisfaction is different according to one to others. In other way, we may say that satisfaction has various approaches to represents its quality level. Therefore in this study, we provide new perspective to improve marital satisfaction by using customer satisfaction based approach. Using the new approach, we identify gap value between spouse's level of importance and practice with respect to several marriage dimensions chosen in this paper. Then, we emphasize some actions need to be taken to improve the marital satisfaction with precisely and specifically addressed to the most dimension needed. The inappropriate efforts may give no significance result to the marital satisfaction. In this article, we assess the quality of marital satisfaction to three dimensions which are Marital Relationship, Marital Adjustment and Marital Intimacy. 1,213 questionnaires returned are distributed across West Malaysia. The result shows that marital relationship is the first priority since this dimension has the lowest level of satisfaction, followed by marital intimacy then marital adjustment as the third priority needs to be improved.

**Keywords:** *Marital Satisfaction, Marital Quality Improvement, Social Policy, Marital, Relationship, Marital Intimacy, Marital Adjustment*

### INTRODUCTION

Exploring marriage issues has been continuously done by researcher to invent and improve the quality of marriage institutions. Various terms are used to express the marital quality such as marital success (Miller et al. 2003; Kaukinen 2004; Papp et al. 2004), marital happiness (Locke & Thomes 1971; Twenge et al. 2003), and many others (Rochlen et al. 2008; Minnottea et al. 2010). All the terms which are used to express the marital quality are referring to the same basic need of feeling to satisfy in marriage life. Successful marriage is found, mostly, if the couple feel satisfy in running their marriage (Lawrence et al. 2008). Hawkins & Booth (2005) stated that low level of marital quality may influence some factors in marriage life such as happiness, life satisfaction, health and self confidence. Interesting study has done by Ono & Raymo (2006) about utilizing wife perspective to analyze the quality of marital satisfaction. Furthermore, a recent study conduct by Rika Fatimah et al. (2009a) has explored the quality perspective into determining priority in marriage life for initiating loyalty and in relations of satisfaction.

The main objective of our study is to allow marriage institutions to be better and stronger facing the marital challenges by having better knowledge and awareness to marital matters that need to be prioritized. Most of the challenges are rooted from socioeconomic changing. For example, divorce that caused by lack of understanding between husband and wife, lack of companionship that caused by social mobile, social interest develop to more on individual based rather than couple based, and re-interpretation of role play between the couple such as the role of husband-breadwinner is nowadays change to husband-househusband, housewife-mother change to breadwinner-mother, etc (Dakin & Wampler 2008; Schwarzwald et al. 2008). Marriage couple should consider continuous improvement for their life since marital life is a dynamic institution. Therefore as stated earlier, to support our objective, this study

emphasize on the process of continuous improvement that support the development of better, stronger, happier, and more loyal marriage institutions.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW APPROACH ON MARITAL SATISFACTION MEASUREMENT**

Although it is noticed that many study have been conduct to explore issues on marital satisfaction, only some of the study explore more on the technique of marital satisfaction measurement. Most of the studies discuss marital satisfaction only for what the respondent feeling on particular matter regarding their married life (Christensen et al. 2010; Helms et al. 2010). We should look further for the fact that satisfaction is closed related to dissatisfaction. The two feeling occurred when someone feel that what his or her hope and need are fail to be fulfil or not fully achieved by his or her spouse (Rika Fatimah et al. 2008). Therefore, it is important to study on identify the difference level of fulfilment between expectation and reality regarding couple in their married life.

In order to measure satisfaction in marriage life, we utilize customer satisfaction based approach to analyze marital satisfaction. The customer satisfaction based approach is a universal theory which is suitable to implement not only for organization life but also for marriage life. The philosophy of the customer satisfaction based approach is rationale to be applied in marital context which may contribute to the marriage field of studies as new perspective for the improvement of marital satisfaction. The main concept of customer satisfaction in organization life is to identify level of customer importance then compare to level of customer satisfaction. Using the customer satisfaction based approach, we identify gap of satisfaction level between couple importance and implementation with respect to several marriage dimensions chosen in this paper. The dimensions represent some variables that explain the marital activities and relationship. By identifying the gap, we may identify the quality of satisfaction of marriage couple in certain dimension then utilize the lowest level of quality of each dimension to be prioritized for improvement.

We emphasize the therapy effort taken to improve the marital satisfaction to be specific addressed to the most dimension needed. It is a useless action if the improvement is given to the dimension which the couple has already satisfied of it. The inappropriate efforts may give no significance result to the marital satisfaction. On contrary, the improvement based on priority scale may give more appropriate treatment in order to fulfil marital satisfaction and hence give more visible change that marriage couple may see and feel.

## **DIMENSION OF MARITAL SATISFACTION**

In purpose to enrich therapy towards efforts of marriage couple to improve their quality of satisfaction, we define three dimensions to describe the marital satisfaction. These dimensions are found based on previous study and expert opinions from fields of marriage study. The three dimensions are Marital Relationship, Marital Adjustment, and Marital Intimacy (Rika Fatimah et al. 2009a). The first dimension is represent couple's action in activities of domestic, leisure, personal, conflict, and conversation (Huston et al. 1987). Other activities which is related to couple interaction such as spouse difference, spouse attachment, spouse companionship are represented in the second dimension of marital adjustment (Spainer & Cole 1976). The last dimension is marital intimacy represented one's assessment of conflict resolution, affection, identity/self confidence, ability, autonomy, and social activity that is done together with one's spouse (Waring et al. 1981).

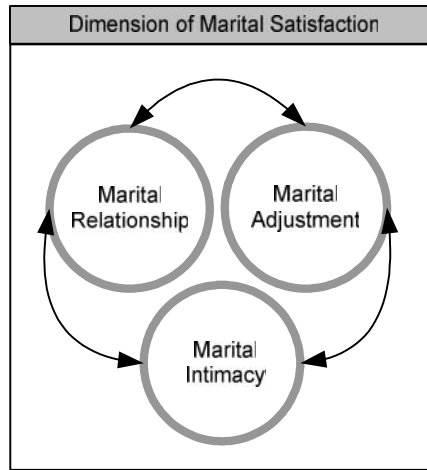


Figure 1: Concept of Relationship for Dimension of Marital Satisfaction

The quality of marital satisfaction needs harmony and suitable relationship among all dimensions. Good marital relationship may be achieved through adjustment process between spouses which then produces intimacy in the relationship of marriage. Furthermore, intimate marriage environment and atmosphere support easier adjustment for spouse then producing the feeling of convenience and caring in a healthy and happy marriage relationship. The relationship concept of the three dimensions is as shown in Figure 1.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION BASED APPROACH ON MARITAL SATISFACTION**

If a product is tangible to be measured then satisfaction is intangible to be measured. It has no quality standard therefore satisfaction is different according to one to others. In other way, we may say that satisfaction has various approaches to represent its quality level. In quality term, satisfaction is common to relate to importance which the result of the fulfillment of importance is satisfaction. In organization's practice, preventing customer is the main goal.

In addition in marital context, preventing spouse is also the main goal of most marriage institution and to achieve the goal, satisfaction's fulfillment is one of the important factors that any couple in marriage should do. If the couple is always feels satisfy to each other then any conflict that might occur is able to be reduced or even avoided (Brown 2004; Brown et al. 2006). Marital conflict is often happened if the spouse's need or importance is not fulfilled which then as result the dissatisfaction will occur (Randall & Bodenmann 2009).

As presented before, satisfaction is not easy to be defined since it is subjective and different from one to another. Even though, some quality expertise has defined the term of satisfaction. Day (1993) has discussed that satisfaction is response to inappropriate evaluation between the different level of importance and feeling of satisfy with respect to one's experience. Caruana et al (2000) has defined that satisfaction is a response to feeling of experience. Kottler (1994) has explained that satisfaction is the level of one's level after comparing the feeling of experience/practice with one's expectation or importance.

Based on some definition stated, it is summarized that satisfaction is concerning with the difference between importance with practice or the feeling of result of the practice. By identifying one's level of satisfaction in marriage then it may identify what need to be prioritized in having improvement for better quality in marriage life. The concept of difference between the importances with the practice is being used as the main concept of developing Marital Satisfaction Index as proposed in further section of this paper.

## MARITAL SATISFACTION INDEX (MSI)

In general, several indexes are used to measure the quality of life and marriage. As in Malaysia, the index of Malaysian Quality of Life utilizing 42 indicators that is represented 11 component of life aspect such as earnings and distributors, working life, transport and communication, healthy education, housing, natural environment, social involvement, public safety, culture and entertainment, and family life. The newest index measurement (1990/2004) has showed that low positive changing of family life as 4.2% compare to higher positive changing of working life as 22.1%. Family life is measured based on Family Life Index which is concerned of several indicators of divorce number, juvenile crime level, birth rate, and housing size (Malaysian of Quality of Life Index and Family Life Index 1980-1998).

Even though, the quality of life is also need to be measured based on non-material matters. The index used is only shows measurement of tangible matters without measuring subjective or abstract thing which is involving feeling and emotion such as satisfaction and importance level of factors involved longevity of marriage life. The index used is only measured in overall assessment without able to identify in detail which dimension is need to be prioritized for improvement.

### *The Development of Marital Satisfaction Index*

In order to able to identify which dimension need to be prioritized, we develop Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI). We do hope that the index may useful to compare the level of one's importance and satisfaction for getting the pattern of marital satisfaction. In this study, we use the index to our respondent from different backgrounds for more various comparison result of the index.

The general concept of assessment using MSI is to identify the pattern of importance fulfilment comparing to the feeling of satisfy of the respondents. We use questionnaires with Likert Scale measurement of 1 for very unimportant/dissatisfy and 10 for very important/satisfied (Devlin et al. 1993) to assess the different value between level of importance and satisfaction of the three dimension of marriage. As shown in Figure 2, the importance scale is as shown as vertical line while satisfaction scale is shown as horizontal line. The assessment is done by using formula (1) below;

$$MSI_i = I_i - P_i \quad (1)$$

where,  $MSI_i$  is Marital Satisfaction Index of  $i$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, n$   
 $I_i$  is Importance level of Dimension of  $i$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, n$   
 $P_i$  is Practice level of Dimension of  $i$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, n$

### *The Level and Interpretations of Marital Satisfaction Index*

MSI provide three level of quality to represent the pattern of assessment of marital satisfaction. The first level is ideal with the assessment value is zero, meaning that the fulfilment of level of importance is the same where the feeling of its practice. The next level is good where the assessment value is  $\pm 1$ , meaning that the fulfilment of level of importance is slightly the same with the feeling of satisfy of its practice. The third level is adequate where the assessment value is  $\pm 2$ , meaning that the fulfilment of level of importance is slightly different from the feeling of satisfy of its practice.

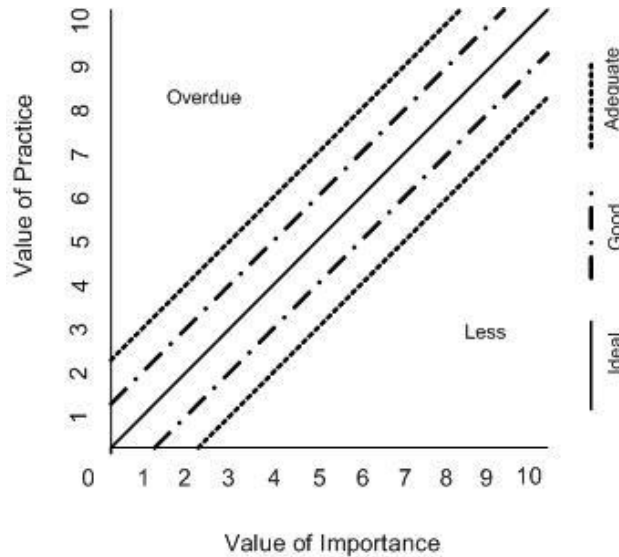


Figure 2: Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) to assess marital satisfaction

Based on the value of respondent, we may describe the MSI level of quality. For example; from the questionnaire, it is identified that the importance value of respondent is 7. If the practice value of the respondent is 7 then the quality level is Ideal. If the practice level is 6 or 8 then the quality level is good. The same calculation for the quality level of Adequate is if the practice value of the respondent is 5 or 9. Furthermore, another level out of the three level of quality is the next two levels are overdue and less. The detail interpretation is as shown in Table 1.

### ***The Improvement Actions***

Based on satisfaction index, we may able interpreted some result of the quality level of marital satisfaction. We should consider the result in determining what appropriate action should be taken. MSI suggest five actions of improvement based on its five level of quality of satisfaction. The first action is Prevention for those who already at the Ideal level since their practice level in running marriage life is at the same level of importance. The last action is Modification for those whose quality level is at Overdue (refer to Table 1). Other three actions are concerning improving action based on priority. Improvement action are needed for the rest three quality level since the result of practice level is below or smaller than the level result of importance. Dissatisfaction occurred may give bad affect to the future of marriage longevity. The affect may decrease marital understanding then as result the marriage institutions is not strong enough to face the future challenge.

Table 1: Interpretations of Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI)

Quality Level	Gap's Value	Interpretations
IDEAL	0	$Importance = Practice$ The practice level is exactly the same as the importance level. The appropriate improvement action is Prevention.
GOOD	1; absolute value	$Importance - Practice = \pm 1$ The practice level is closely the same as the importance level. The appropriate improvement action is Improvement with low priority.

ADEQUATE	2; absolute value	$Importance - Practice = \pm 2$ The practice level is adequately the same as the importance level. The appropriate improvement action is Improvement with adequate priority.
OVERDUE	$\leq -3$ ; negative value	$Importance < Practice$ The practice level is higher than the importance level. The appropriate improvement action is Modification. Efforts on practice should be modified since the practice is done to matters that not important according to each spouse. Therefore, the efforts should be modified by giving more efforts to other matters that more important.
LESS	$\geq 3$ ; positive value	$Importance > Practice$ The practice level is adequately the same as the importance level. The appropriate improvement action is Improvement with adequate priority.

The third action is low priority of improvement for those who already at Good level. The action is appropriate enough since there is space of improvement to fulfil improvement to the Ideal satisfaction. The next level of improvement is Adequate Priority of Improvement. This effort is needed by those whose satisfaction level is at Adequate. Furthermore, those who at less level, high priority of improvement is need to be done. This level of improvement is important since respondent assess that related dimension is important but the satisfaction of the dimension implementation is less then as result the respondent feel dissatisfy. The presentation of MSI is as shown in Figure 2 while the index interpretation is as presented as Table 1.

## THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, we use questionnaire to collect respondent's point of view with regard to MSI. Under the survey, we gathered 1,213 questionnaires across West Malaysia. In addition, as shown in Table 2, we have identified several regions as well as the cities of the state. The numbers of questionnaires distributed in these cities are decided based on the share of the total population contributed by the states identified in the particular regions.

Table 2: Distributions of Returned Questionnaires for the Different Regions

REGIONS	CENTRAL			FEDERAL TERRITORY	SOUTHERN	NORTHERN	
STATES	SELANGOR		NEGERI SEMBILAN	KUALA LUMPUR	JOHOR DARUL TAKZIM	KEDAH	
CITY	Bangi	Kajang	Seremban	Kuala Lumpur	Johor Bahru	Kedah	
Numbers	300	200	105	403	202	50	1,213
Scalling (%)	24.73	16.49	8.66	33.22	16.65	4.12	100

### Subjects

According to gender, we have 51.6% male respondents and 48.4% female respondents who are married and have children. In terms of length of marriage, 34.3% of our respondents are married for the period of less than 10 years, 30.3% for the period of between 12 until 17 years and 35.4% for the period of more than 17 years. According to ethnic groups, 46.5% of our respondents are Malay, followed by 33.3% Chinese, and the rest are Indian. There are many types of occupation of the respondents; however, the two most common occupations are

related to the private sectors (39.3%) and followed by conducting their own business (27.2%).

### ***Instruments***

We develop questionnaire by integrating literature study and focus group among expertise in field of marital satisfaction and customer satisfaction. The questionnaire consists two main parts. The first part is about background of respondents, with 15 questions asking for gender, race, the difference of age between husband and wife, length of marriage and etc. The second part involves questions regarding overall opinions on the level of importance and satisfaction of three dimension chosen which are relationship between couple, level of efforts on various characteristics for marital adjustment and level of caring and loving of the couple for marital intimacy.

### ***Scales of data and Method of Analysis***

We ask the respondents to summarize their opinion regarding the overall level of importance with respect to all family dimensions. Under the dimension of marital relationship, we pose questions asking respondents about their daily practice with their spouses. We ask the respondents regarding efforts to understand their spouses for the marital adjustment. Under the third dimension of marital intimacy, we ask matters regarding caring and loving of the couple.

In the data analysis, likert scale are applied, with ordinal scales of 1 to 10. We use 1 to indicate 'very unimportant', showing that the respondent feels that a particular dimension is not important while 10 for 'very important'. In addition, we also ask the respondent regarding the overall level of practice with respect to all family dimensions. We use 1 to indicate 'very dissatisfy', showing that the respondent feels that a particular dimension is not important while 10 for 'very satisfy'.

The data that are gathered based on the questionnaire is producing two type value which are indicate the level of importance and level of feeling on the practice with regards to all dimension of marital satisfaction. Then we analyze the data by using MSI in order to determine the gap or difference level between importance and practice as posed by the respondents. We also process the data by analyze the relationship occurred in terms of gap level on dimension of marital satisfaction with respondent's background. From the data processing, we emphasize the discussion on significant result which shows by the value of  $p$  is smaller than 0.05. In addition, we use *Binary Logistic* analysis to compare possibility of problems occurred in one or more dimension with respect to respondent's background.

As the final result, we determine several level of marital satisfaction, than traditionally only one level of satisfaction, and decide on the dimension and respondent's background that should be given priorities. Based on the given priorities, we shall deliver more efficient and effective improvement action to improve the quality of marital satisfaction.

### ***Scale Reliability and Validity***

In this study, the most common measure of reliability which is Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), based on Cronbach (1951), has been used. The values of 0.7-0.8 above are an acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha, and values substantially lower indicated an unreliable scale. Although the generally accepted value is 0.8 above is appropriate for cognitive tests such as intelligent tests, for ability tests a cut-off point of 0.7 is more suitable. Dealing with psychological constructs, lower values such as below even 0.7 can, realistically, be expected because of the diversity of the construct being measured. The questionnaire in this study are found acceptable in terms of scale of reliability since we found the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value of  $\pm 0.95$  for each part of questionnaire.

## RESULT

The result of MSI has found that there are no significant between marital relationship and some respondent's background of family income, socioeconomic, status of husband's age, age difference between spouses, have children and adult children. Furthermore, we found that gender, husband's occupation, working wife, family income, status of husband's age, and having adult children have no effect to the satisfaction of marital adjustment. In addition, marital intimacy has shown no significant result with regards to family income and having teenage.

Furthermore, we present the result based on two important studies [as provided in Table 3](#). First, we provide level of dimension of marital satisfaction then determine priority which dimension need to improve first. Then, not only we determine the priority based on dimension, we also determine what kind of respondent's background that need more attention than others. Furthermore, we also support the findings with result of problems occurred in one or more dimension and with the result of Binary Logistic Analysis that allow us to compare the possibility of the problem occurred.

### ***Marital Satisfaction Index Result Based on Dimension***

The MSI result ([refer to Table 3](#)) has shown that marriage relationship has the highest number with 21% at the lowest level or less level of satisfaction. Marital intimacy followed with 17.9% and marital adjustment with 8.1%. This condition is consistent with the result shown in the measure of problem occurred as marital relationship with 19.3%, marital intimacy with 17.9 then followed by the least problem occurred in marital adjustment with 7.8%.

The result support the concept of relationship, as presented earlier, between all dimensions which are each dimension is affected each other. The lowest level of marital relationship cause less intimacy then adjustment to spouse is harder to be done.

### ***Marital Satisfaction Index Based on the Respondent's Background***

With regard to respondent's background to the dimension of marital relationship ([refer to Table 3](#)), we found that 21.0% of married couple with low level of education has less level of satisfaction. It is clear that education is important especially for achievement of level of Adequate and Good. It has shown that 28.6% respondents whose level of education is at Elementary School have achieved satisfaction level of Adequate. Better level of satisfaction has achieved for 35.8% of those whose education level is post graduate.

Next, we found that length of marriage plays important influence to the respondents on their satisfaction of marital intimacy. The analysis result has shown that 17.9% married couple with length of marriage 12 until 17 years at the Less level of satisfaction which is also represent respondent's background in terms of problems occurred. Furthermore, referring to the comparison of the possibility of problem occurred, this study has found that marriage which is lasting for 12 until 17 years have twice possibility to have problem compare to marriage which lasting for more than 18 years. In additions, the comparison has also shown that marriage less than 12 years has 1.14 times more possible than those for more than 18 years. The result of marital intimacy has also shown that education factor plays important roles for achieving better level of satisfaction. The fact is supported by our result of 44% respondents who have diploma at level of Ideal and 39.6% respondents who have postgraduate degree at level of Good.

Factor of education and age difference between husband and wife still dominated for marital adjustment. There are 8.1% respondents whose level of education of elementary school at level of less. Furthermore, 23.4% couple who have average level of socioeconomic are found at level of Adequate. Our study also has identified that the possibility of having



problem of marital adjustment is more happened for 7.9% couple whose age different is more than six years. If these group of couple, it is found that the first group is 2.5 more possible having problem to those who are in the same age and twice more to those who are age different for three until six years old.

**Table 3:** MSI result (highest %), pattern, and improvement action with respect to dimension of marital satisfaction and respondent's background.

Quality Level ( <i>MSI</i> )	Marital Relationship ( <i>MSI<sub>1</sub></i> )		Marital Adjustment ( <i>MSI<sub>2</sub></i> )		Marital Intimacy ( <i>MSI<sub>3</sub></i> )		Improvement Actions
	Respondent's Background	Percentage (%)	Respondent's Background	Percentage (%)	Respondent's Background	Percentage (%)	
IDEAL	Race: Indian	45.7	Respondent's level of edu.: Diploma	57.7	Respondent & family level of edu.: Diploma	44.4	Prevention
GOOD	Respondent's level of edu.: Post Graduate	35.8	Respondent's level of edu.: Post Graduate	32.1	Spouse's level of edu.: Post Graduate	39.6	Improvement with low priority
ADEQUATE	Spouse's level of edu.: Elementary School	28.6	Socioeconomic: Adequate	23.4	Length of marriage: 12-17 years	30.7	Improvement with adequate priority
OVERDUE	Husband's Occupation: Private	3.1	Respondent's level of edu.: Elementary School	6.2	Husband's Occupation: Private	3.6	Modification
LESS	<i>Family level of edu.: Elementary School</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>Family level of edu.: Elementary School</i>	<i>8.1</i>	<i>Length of marriage: 12-17 years</i>	<i>17.9</i>	Improvement with high priority
Problem occurred in one/more dimensions	<i>Race: Malay</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>Age different between spouse: &gt; 6th</i>	<i>7.9</i>	<i>Length of marriage: 12-17th</i>	<i>17.9</i>	
Priority of Dimension	<b>1</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>		
Comparison of possibility of problem occurred	Malay 2.7x than Indian Chinese 1.5x than Indian		Difference 0-2years 0.4x than > 6years Difference 3-6yeras 0.5x than > 6years		Length 11years 1.14x than 18years Length 12-17years 2.0x than 18years		

### ***First Priority: Improvement on Marital Relationship***

As presented in the result section, marital relationship has the worst satisfaction compare to marital adjustment and intimacy. Therefore, based on the result, we determine that marital relationship is the dimension that needs urgent improvement action.

The result has shown that respondents at level of Less, Adequate, and Good are influence by level of education. Marital relationship comprises of several activities of domestic activities, leisure activities, personal interaction, conflict and conversations (Huston et al. 1987) which are commonly known have close relationship with one's level of education. Higher level of education provides one's capability to be able to have better planning and communication.

In addition, the ability to communicate and manage is also increase following the level of one's education. Those abilities give each couple to appreciate, understand, and plan their implementation of marital relationship (Smits 2003). Level of education is able to be improved through independent course of skill such as communication course, marital seminar, marital reading, and etc.

### ***Second Priority: Improvement on Marital Intimacy***

The second dimension that needs attention to be improved is marital intimacy. Intimacy in marriage needs efforts of togetherness especially in conflict resolutions, care, identity or self confidence. Various matters shall influence to achieve better satisfaction. Hence, the result indicates that length of marriage took important part in achieving level of satisfaction among respondents.

With respect to respondent's background, respondent with length of marriage of 12 until 17 years have the lowest level of satisfaction of marital intimacy. In terms of marriage cycle, Locke and Thomes (1971) indicate that length of marriage for 12 until 17 years is also known as middle marriage/children development/growth. The problem that often occurred mostly rooted on the matter of rising children. In this period, marriage couple put attention to the children need and growth more than self marital intimacy which is because conflicts often happened since love given is more focused to the children.

Other study also stated that marriage cycle started by increasing trend of the level of satisfaction of marital intimacy, then decreasing as the period of rising the children to adult then increasing again after children get married and left from home to be independent (Weishaus & Field 1988; Hirschberger 2009). For old happy couple, marriage is function as source of comfortable and support which describe the marital intimacy as the marriage length (Duvall 1976).

Taking account the marriage cycle, improvement action need to be taken for those who at middle marriage is to set agreement and commitment of giving priority for their children development. The agreement also has explained about providing sufficient time for the couple to maintain their marital intimacy without forgetting other responsibility of rising the children. By having agreement and sufficient time may decrease misunderstanding between couple then able to avoid conflict which is supported the intimacy in marriage.

### ***Third Priority: Improvement on Marital Adjustment***

Improvement actions need to be taken for those whose level of satisfaction of marital adjustment at level of Less. Our study has found that age difference between couple give significant affect to succeed process of marital adjustment. Mostly problem occurred are happened for couple with the age different for more than six years. Bereczkei & Csanaky

(1996) in their study stated that both man and woman are preferred to choose spouse with age different of 3.6 years old. In the study has also presented that the level of satisfaction of marital adjustment for couple with the age difference of 3.6 years are higher which the same as what we have also found in this paper.

Life style and point of view for each person is different from one to another. Couple who have range of age different too big are affecting the difference of point of view and life principal for each couple. In addition, environment condition has also influenced one's capability in consideration, acceptance to difference, and increase benefit to succeed adjustment process between them.

In order to improve the level of satisfaction of marital adjustment, the couple need to consider several important matters such as spouse's difference, spouse's attachment, companionship and agreement (Spainer & Cole 1976). For those whose age different too wide may treat their differences as complement rather than as barrier. The couple should utilize this point of view and principal as their fundamental for adjusting themselves to their spouse. By doing this, the spouse's difference may not exist then may achieve better attachment and companionship which increase their level of agreement.

## **SOCIAL AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Marital satisfaction is important for couple in married and family life. Social researchers consistently has found that married people has better prosperous both in physically and mentally than those who are not married, separated, and divorced (Horowitz et al. 1917; Waite & Gallagher 2000; Saxbe & Repetti 2008). Better self confidence, social status appreciation, and emotional stability may lead someone to contribute to human resources development that have better value of productivity, personal, and mental for the sake of the development of nations (Rika Fatimah et al. 2009b; Marks & Lambert 1998). Based on this, it is important to identify the quality of marital satisfaction that support human resources development who competitive both at work and life. Information and understanding of the quality of marital satisfaction may contribute valuable input to government, private organization, and working institutions for the decision maker to pay attention in marital assessment, measurement, and improvement.

Beside of knowing how important marital satisfaction is, it is also important to understand that improving the quality of marital satisfaction is another issue need to be discussed. In order to improve marital satisfaction, it is important to be able to measure the satisfaction itself. It is not easy to measure marital satisfaction since it has many characteristics which have been influenced by various regulations and controls that have been set up for the marriage institution. Taking account the complexity and highly abstract matters happened in marriage, effort to explore new approach in measuring marital satisfaction need to be given opportunity.

Therefore, in this study, we provide new approach to measure marital satisfaction with Marital Satisfaction Index. As discussed earlier, MSI not only able to identify feeling of satisfy to a certain matter in marriage life but also identify feeling of satisfy on the fulfilment of importance of one's to particular matter. There are always differences between hope and reality. If one able to fulfil the hope than he or she should be satisfy.

In addition, MSI also provide quality level of marital satisfaction which may useful for the marriage therapist in determining their patient's priority of improvement that should be taken. MSI also provide simple interpretations for each level of satisfaction and level of improvement action that proper to be given to the particular level of satisfaction. The detail

range of measurement, give more accuracy and quantitative result which give easier indicator to control the improvement process.

## CONCLUSION

Marital issues are universal issues that give significant affect to many others field of studies of life. Therefore, it is important to improve the issues continuously in order to make better development to the couple of marriage which is also give better affect to their life and environment. In having improvement, it is important to assess what is the current condition of the marriage institutions selves. Accommodating the need of assessment, we provide new approach in assessing marital institution which is focusing to satisfaction matters.

The new approach we brought in this paper is customer satisfaction approach which is world widely applied in many organizations. Customer satisfaction approach is also universal issues for customer care in most of organization. Almost every strategic planning and policies are taking account the matters related to their customers. Similar concept and philosophy in the approach of customer satisfaction has allowed the approach to be implemented to marital context as new point of view for the improvement of marital satisfaction. By using the new approach, we has able to identified the gap between the level of importance and practice of respondents which is the gap is representing the level of satisfaction with respect to dimensions of marital satisfaction used in this study. The lesser practice level compared to importance level then the lower level of marital satisfaction. On contrary, the higher practice level compared to importance level meaning that the level of satisfaction is high. Having this information of level of satisfaction for each respondent may give us guidance for determining appropriate action for improvement. In addition, our study also has proposed several level of improvement action based on the satisfaction level. There are three main improvement actions which are Preventing, Improving with Priority, and Modification.

We develop Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) for the more appropriate assessment of the quality of marital satisfaction. In this study, we use three dimensions which are marital relationship, adjustment, and intimacy, for assessing the level of marital satisfaction for each respondent involved. The result, pattern, interpretations, and improvement action of MSI has discussed in this paper as well.

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