



MAINTAINING A HARMONIOUS LONG DISTANCE MARRIAGE: A STUDY AMONG MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Medical practitioners in Malaysia are often required to work long hours and irregular shifts, which can make it challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance and sustain a fulfilling personal life. This is particularly true for those who are in long distance marriages, where the demands of their work can often take priority over their relationship. This research paper aims to explore the topic of long distance marriage among medical practitioners in Malaysia, examining the challenges they face and the coping strategies they use to maintain a harmonious and healthy relationship. This study uses interview methods to find out how medical practitioners who live far away from their spouses and families can maintain these relationships. These interviews were conducted with 25 medical practitioners working in 10 different states in Malaysia including the states of Sabah, Sarawak, Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu, Johor, Pahang, Kelantan, Selangor, Penang and Perak. While the spouses of these 25 medical practitioners who were interviewed were in a different state. The findings were analyzed using thematic content analysis according to the sub-themes that have been identified in this study. Then the main challenges faced by medical practitioners in long distance marriages and the approaches in maintaining long-distance marriage harmony that have been identified are thematized. The results of the study show several challenges that can impact their personal and professional lives, namely irregular work schedules, physical distance, communication barriers, family obligations, financial strain and cultural differences. While the main findings of the study shows that there were four important aspects in maintaining long-distance marriage harmony, namely spirituality, faithfulness, responsibility and constant communication.

Keywords: Maintaining; Harmonious; Long Distance Marriage; Medical practitioners

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1. Introduction

A harmonious marriage is a relationship that is based on mutual love, respect, and cooperation between spouses. It is a sacred bond established by Allah, and it requires both partners to fulfill each other's rights and responsibilities as outlined in Islamic law (Al-Qaradawi, 1999).

Islam is a systematic and complete way of life given as a guidance from Allah SWT for the whole human being. It encompasses and guides all aspects and desires from human beings, whether physical, emotional or spiritual needs. One of the most important aspects in Islam is the institution and strengthening of a muslim family (Yusuf Chik et. al, 2018).

Therefore, in order to achieve a happy and peaceful life, each individual should practice the values of humanity as well as good behavior. This is because all these practices play a role in determining our happiness in this world and the hereafter (Al-Farabi, 1971).

The formation of a harmonious and prosperous household requires a heavy sense of responsibility, which needs to be borne by the husband and wife so that this trust can be carried out fairly and perfectly. Like the hadith from Ibn Umar RA from the Prophet SAW, that he said:

أَلَا كَلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ فَالْأَمِيرُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ بَعْطَلِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْنُونَةٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْهُ أَلَا فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

Meaning: Know that each of you is a leader, and each of you is responsible for what he leads. A leader who leads the people will be responsible for his people, a man is the leader of his family, and he is responsible for all of them, a woman is also the leader of her husband's house and her children, and she is responsible for them all, a servant is the leader of his master's property, and he is responsible for the property. Each of you is a leader and will be responsible for his leadership."

(Riwayat al-Bukhari)

The hadith above shows the importance of leadership in creating a harmonious household. Because only a good and harmonious household leadership is able to strengthen love, overcome conflicts effectively and move towards the same goal, which is happiness in this world and in the hereafter (al-Bayanuni, 1988).

Ideally every family will build their happiness and live in one house with the nuclear family, but there are times when a family cannot live in one house and live side by side every day (Khairuddin, 2008). There are many reasons why a family cannot live together in one house, one of which is because of the demand in their current job. This kind of marriage can be called commuter marriage or long-distance marriage (Tessina, 2008).

Long distance marriage is a situation in which a couple lives in different locations during work days and sometimes for a longer period of time for the sake of the spouse's career (Mcbride & Bergen, 2014) or physically separate after marriage (Pistole et al., 2010). because of the demands of life in the modern era (Mijilputri, 2015; Purwanto et al., 2018; Widyanisa et al., 2018).

In Malaysia, the number of commuter families is estimated at 500,000 people. However, there are no accurate statistics on the number of commuter families in Malaysia because no comprehensive census has been done. The need for career advancement and furthering education are the main cause of the ever-increasing population of commuter families in this country. If it is not managed well, it can lead to division and disorganization in the family, high depression and low marital satisfaction (Jamiah Manap, 2019).

A career as a medical practitioner is one of the jobs that requires them to live apart from their spouses. According to a report by the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) in 2018, the number of doctors in Malaysia has been increasing steadily over the years. However, the distribution of doctors across

the country is uneven, with many doctors concentrated in urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. This means that medical practitioners may need to relocate or commute long distances to work in these areas, which can result in living apart from their spouses. While according to a survey conducted by the MMA in 2020, medical practitioners in Malaysia face various challenges in their personal and professional lives, including work-life balance and family responsibilities. These challenges can be amplified for medical practitioners who need to live apart from their spouses.

Thus, this study aims to find out the main challenges faced by medical practitioners in long distance marriages and then examine the approach taken by medical practitioners in an effort to maintain harmonious relationships despite having to go through a long-distance marriage.

2. Methodology

This study is generally a qualitative study. The nature of this study is theoretical and practical as well as descriptive analysis, that is to accurately describe the characteristics of an individual, certain conditions or symptoms and the relationship between these symptoms (Koentjaraningrat, 1991). This research can also be classified as library research and field research, because the data source is obtained from library and field sources. In obtaining data in the field, structured and unstructured interview methods were conducted on a group of selected medical practitioners who were used as a research sample. A total of 25 medical practitioners were selected as a sample according to their respective duty states. The focus of the interview conducted is divided into 3 phases.

Table 1: Interview focus and phases

Phase	Interview Focus
Phase 1	Introduction session and getting background information.
Phase 2	Sessions focus more on research questions that require further explanation. The questions include the methods taken by medical practitioners who practice long-distance marriages in maintaining the harmony of family relationships
Phase 3	Focus on documents review

The findings are analyzed using thematic content analysis where the researcher has to organize the findings according to the sub-themes that have been identified by the researcher in this study. Researchers have given a theme in each of the different challenges faced by medical practitioners in long distance marriages and approaches in maintaining the harmony of long-distance marriages.

3. Results and Discussion

These findings discuss the demographic profile of the entire sample involved. This

interview involved 25 medical practitioners from all hospitals in peninsular Malaysia including Sabah and Sarawak which aimed to find out the main challenges faced by medical practitioners in long distance marriages and the strategies they took during long distance marriages in maintaining marital harmony.

This section will discuss the descriptive analysis and inferential analysis as well as display the findings of the study based on the informant's response to the interview questions. The descriptive analysis of this study contains part A which is the demographics of the informant which

includes the background of the informant, part B which is the main challenges faced by medical practitioners in long distance marriages and part C which is the strategy of maintaining long-distance marriage

harmony.

Part A: Demographic Profile

The table below shows the information of each informant 01 to informant 25 in detail:

Table 2: Informant's Profile

No.	Age	Gender	Position	Work Placement	Spouse Placement
01	35	M	Specialist	Hosp. Miri, Sarawak	Selangor
02	31	F	Medical Officer	Hosp. Miri, Sarawak	Selangor
03	39	F	Medical Officer	HUKM, Kuala Lumpur	Johor Bharu
04	37	F	Specialist	HSNZ, Kuala Terengganu	Kelantan
05	33	M	Medical Officer	UNIMAS, Sarawak	Perak
06	34	M	Specialist	Hospital Enche' Besar Hajjah Khalsom, Johor	Selangor
07	36	M	Specialist	Hospital Labuan, Sabah	Terengganu
08	31	F	Medical Officer	Hospital Miri, Sarawak	Kelantan
09	37	M	Specialist	Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan, Pahang	Terengganu
10	34	F	Medical Officer	HUKM, Kuala Lumpur	Sabah
11	30	F	Medical Officer	HRPZ, Kelantan	Sarawak
12	35	M	Medical Officer	HUSM, Kelantan	Terengganu
13	37	M	Specialist	HUiTM, Sungai Buloh, Selangor	Pulau Pinang
14	34	F	Specialist	Hospital Pulau Pinang	Selangor
15	30	M	Medical Officer	Hospital Selayang, Selangor	Sarawak
16	35	F	Pharmacist	HSNZ, Kuala Terengganu	Kelantan
17	39	M	Specialist	Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, Perak	Selangor
18	36	F	Specialist	Hospital Teluk Intan, Perak	Selangor
19	33	M	Specialist	Hospital Duchess Of Kent, Sandakan, Sabah	Penang
20	32	F	Medical Officer	Hospital Sibul, Sarawak	Selangor
21	32	F	Medical Officer	Hospital Sultan Ismail Petra, Kelantan	Selangor
22	38	F	Consultant	HUiTM, Puncak Alam, Selangor	Johor
23	37	F	Specialist	Hospital Teluk Intan, Perak	Selangor
24	35	M	Specialist	Hospital Umum Sarawak	Kuala Lumpur
25	33	F	Medical	Hospital Selayang, Selangor	Terengganu

			Officer		
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Based on the table above, the informants in this study consisted of 14 women and 11 men. Between age 30 to 34 years old there were a total of 12 people, while informants aged between 35-39 years totaled 13 people. The findings of the study found that most informants were among specialists, which is a total of 12 people representing 47% of the 25 total informants. While the informants who hold positions as medical practitioners are 11 people, equal to 44%, followed by consultants and pharmacists, 1 person each, which is equal to 4%. While the placement for all medical practitioners

involved in this interview are from multiple states in Malaysia, namely Sarawak, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Terengganu, Johor Bharu, Pahang, Kelantan, Selangor, Penang, Perak and Sabah.

Part B: The Main Challenges In Long Distance Marriages

Based on the interviews conducted, medical practitioners in long distance marriages in Malaysia face several challenges that can impact their personal and professional lives. Some of the main challenges include:

Themes		Sub-themes	
1.	Irregular work schedules	i.	Long hours and irregular shifts
		ii.	Difficulty in maintaining consistent schedules
2.	Physical distance	i.	Feelings of loneliness and isolation
		ii.	Emotional disconnection
3.	Communication barriers	i.	
		ii.	Limited access to technology
4.	Family obligations	i.	Balancing work responsibilities and family
		ii.	Responsibility towards spouse, children and parents
4.	Financial strain	i.	Frequent travel
		ii.	Maintaining two households

a) Irregular work schedules

Medical practitioners often have to work long hours and irregular shifts, which can make it difficult to maintain a consistent and predictable schedule for their personal life. This was mentioned by the informant 01, 02, 03, and 08.

Irregular work schedules refer to work schedules that are unpredictable or vary significantly from week to week. These schedules can include night shifts, rotating shifts, or on-call duty (Golden & Wiens-Tuers, 2013).

A study published in the Journal of Marriage and Family in 2015 examined the impact of work schedules on marital satisfaction among couples in long-distance

marriages. The study found that irregular work schedules were associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction, even after controlling for other factors such as distance and communication frequency. The study suggested that the unpredictability and inconsistency of irregular work schedules can disrupt the routines and expectations that couples have for their time together, leading to greater stress and conflict in the relationship (Doherty & Willoughby, 2015).

Another study published in the Journal of Family Psychology in 2018 found that irregular work schedules were associated with higher levels of stress and lower levels

of family cohesion among military couples in long-distance marriages. The study suggested that irregular work schedules can make it difficult for couples to coordinate their schedules and maintain regular communication, which can further exacerbate the stress and strain of a long-distance relationship. These studies suggest that irregular work schedules can be a significant challenge in long-distance marriages. Couples in these relationships may need to be proactive in finding ways to manage and mitigate the stress and disruption caused by irregular work schedules, such as setting clear expectations and routines for communication and planning visits and time together around work schedules as much as possible (Gewirtz et. al, 2018).

b) Physical distance

Being physically separated from their spouse can lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and emotional disconnection. This was mentioned by the informant 04, 05, 06 and 07.

This is proven through a research conducted by Fowers & Olson (1992). This study examined the impact of physical distance on marital satisfaction among couples in long-distance relationships. The study surveyed 181 couples who were living apart due to work or school commitments, and found that physical distance was a significant challenge in their relationships. The study found that physical distance was negatively associated with marital satisfaction, and that couples who had been living apart for longer periods of time reported lower levels of satisfaction. The study also found that couples who were able to maintain frequent and regular communication, as well as make visits to see each other, reported higher levels of marital satisfaction despite the physical distance.

Dainton & Aylor (2002) examined the communication patterns and strategies of couples in long-distance relationships, and found that physical separation was a

significant challenge for these couples. The study found that being physically separated from their spouse led to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and emotional disconnection. The study also found that couples who were able to use a variety of communication channels, such as phone calls, email, and video chat, were better able to maintain emotional connection and cope with the challenges of physical separation.

Harris & Ono (2005) examined the impact of physical distance on the quality of relationships among couples in long-distance relationships. The study surveyed young adults who were in long-distance relationships and found that the amount of physical distance between partners was negatively associated with relationship quality. The study also found that frequent communication and visits between partners helped to mitigate the negative effects of physical distance on relationship quality.

c) Communication barriers

Long distance marriages can be complicated by communication barriers. This was mentioned by the informant 09, 10, 12, 13, 20, 22 and 24.

This is also proven through a study conducted by Stafford & Merolla (2007). This study examined the impact of communication barriers on the stability of long-distance relationships. The study surveyed 63 couples who were living apart and found that communication barriers were a significant challenge in their relationships. The study found that couples who had more difficulty communicating due to factors such as distance, time differences, and technological limitations, reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction and were more likely to experience relationship instability. The study also found that couples who were able to idealize their partner and maintain high levels of optimism about the future of the relationship were more likely to remain stable despite the communication barriers. However, the study notes that such

idealization may not be sustainable in the long run, and that efforts to overcome communication barriers through frequent and regular communication are crucial for maintaining the stability of long-distance marriages.

d) Family obligations

Medical practitioners in long distance marriages may also have a problem to balance their work responsibilities with their family obligations, particularly if they have children or aging parents who require care. This was mentioned by the informant 11, 14, 15 and 16.

This matter is also supported by a study conducted by Luo & Snider (2009). The study examined the impact of family obligations on marital satisfaction among couples in long-distance marriages. The study surveyed 163 married individuals who were living apart from their spouse due to work or school commitments and found that family obligations were a significant challenge in their relationships. The study found that individuals who had greater family obligations, such as caring for aging parents or raising children, reported lower levels of marital satisfaction and were more likely to experience relationship distress.

In addition, there is a study that examined the impact of family obligations on stress and marital satisfaction among married graduate students who were living apart from their spouses due to academic commitments. The study found that family obligations were a significant source of stress for these couples and were associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. The study also found that couples who were able to balance their family obligations with their individual needs and maintain effective communication reported higher levels of marital satisfaction despite the challenges of physical separation (Kirk &

Sandberg, 2009).

e) Financial strain

Long distance marriages can be financially challenging, particularly if one spouse is required to travel frequently or if the couple has to maintain two households. This was mentioned by the informant 17, 18, 19, 21, 23 and 25.

There is a study that examined the impact of financial strain on long-distance romantic relationships, focusing specifically on the role of communication and emotional well-being. The study surveyed 322 individuals in long-distance romantic relationships and found that financial strain was a significant challenge in their relationships. The study found that individuals who reported higher levels of financial strain were more likely to report lower levels of relationship satisfaction, and that this relationship was mediated by emotional well-being and communication frequency (Lin & Utz, 2015).

Then another study examined the impact of financial strain on the transition to marriage among young adult couples, including those in long-distance relationships. The study surveyed 513 young adults and found that financial strain was a significant challenge in their relationships. The study found that financial strain was negatively associated with the likelihood of transitioning to marriage, and that this relationship was mediated by relationship quality and relationship stability (Cao & Schoenberg, 2015).

Part C: Approach in Maintaining A Harmonious Long Distance Marriage

Part C interview is about the approach taken in trying to maintain a harmonious long distance marriage. The author had formed appropriate themes and sub-themes based on the outlined aspects. Among the themes and sub-themes identified were:

Table 3: Table of Themes and Sub-themes of Approach in Maintaining A Harmonious Long Distance Marriage

Themes	Sub-themes
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1.	Spirituality	i. ii. iii.	Observing prayer Keeping busy with productive activities Practicing Islam in every aspect of life
2.	Faithfully	i. ii. iii. iv. v.	Keeping boundaries with the opposite gender Expressing love to spouse verbally Trusting my spouse Frequent physical meetup Remembering fond memories spent together
3.	Constant communication.	i. ii.	Frequent virtual and verbal contact (video call, voice call, whatsapp) Emotional sharing sessions
4.	Responsibility	i. ii. iii.	Provide safe living environment for spouse Give physical and spiritual nafkah to spouse Seek support from family members, friends, or professional caregivers to share the responsibility of caring for aging parents.

a) Spirituality

Based on the interviews conducted, two of the informants emphasized the spiritual aspect and the importance of religion in their lives because it affects how they maintain harmony in their marriage. According to the informant, high Islamic spiritual aspects such as not leaving prayers, always busying oneself with beneficial activities and always practicing Islamic manners in life are vital key points. This can be seen from the informant's response, which are as follows:

Always keep praying and busy yourself with beneficial activities."(01)

Don't leave religion in life and always practice Islamic manners."(06)

Many previous researches have found a significant relationship between the religious component and the harmony of the married couple's relationship (Mahoney, 2010). Allah SWT encourages Muslims to protect each other's family members through strong religious education to avoid them from falling into the valley of destruction (hell):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقْوُذْهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ

Meaning: O believers! Protect yourself and your family from the fire of hell whose fuel

is people and stones. (Al-Tahrim: 6)

A Muslim wife will always look after the glory of her religion, preserve her dignity and honor and fulfill her rights and obligations (Nayif Hasyim, 1988) and stick to the principles of noble teachings (Sayyid Sabiq, 1994) as well as her husband, because a happy family is the family that gets the pleasure of Allah SWT, that is, Allah SWT is pleased with them and they are also pleased with Allah SWT as His words:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

Meaning: God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.

(Al-Bayyinah: 8)

The religious factor is an important element in ensuring household harmony because Islam is built on three main foundations covering matters of faith, Sharia and morals. Those three basic things are the backbone in the formation of a harmonious household (Ahmad Nazri, 2017).

A Sinar Harian newspaper report dated 29 August 2012 quoted a statement from the Johor State Kadi Besar which stated that 90 percent of the number of divorce cases recorded in the state were found to be caused by family backgrounds that neglected prayer and did not seek to get

closer to God. Without strong religious beliefs, married life will be shaky because it is religion that will shape a person's outlook and lifestyle. In the institution of a household, the religious factor is an important element that becomes a pillar of the happiness of a household so that Islam makes it the main basis in the selection of a spouse as affirmed by the Prophet in his words:

Women are married for four things; because of her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religion, then choose a woman who is religious, you will surely be prosperous."

(Hadith Narrated by Bukhari: 5090 in Sahih Bukhari).

Islamic spirituality can play an important role in maintaining harmony in long-distance marriages. Several studies have highlighted the importance of Islamic spirituality in enhancing marital satisfaction, reducing marital conflicts, and promoting well-being among Muslim couples (Mahmoud, 2016; Hasan, 2015; Zahari & Ismail, 2016).

One way in which Islamic spirituality can help maintain harmony in long-distance marriages is by providing a sense of purpose and meaning to the relationship. According to Islamic teachings, marriage is a sacred bond that is based on love, compassion, and mutual respect like the words of Allah in Surah Ar Rum:

يٰۤاٰلِٓنَّاسُ كُنُوْا اَرْوَاٰجِٓا۟ اَنْفُسِكُمْ مِّنْ لَّكُمْ خَلْقٌ اَنْ اٰبِيْهٖ وَاَمِّنْ
لَّقَوْمٍ لَّآيٰتٍۭ ذٰلِكَ فِیۡ ۙ اِنَّ وَّرَحْمَةً مَّوَدَّةً مَّبِيْنًا وَّجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ

Meaning: And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.

(Ar-Rum: 21)

By viewing their marriage as a means of seeking Allah's pleasure and fulfilling their religious obligations, Muslim couples can stay motivated and committed to their relationship, even when they are physically apart.

In addition, Islamic spirituality encourages the practice of daily prayers, remembrance of Allah, and reading the Quran, which can serve as a source of comfort and solace for Muslim couples in long-distance marriages. Research has shown that the practice of religious rituals can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and promote emotional well-being (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015; Seyyed-Razi & Seyyed-Razavi, 2018).

Moreover, Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of communication, kindness, and forgiveness in marital relationships. Muslim couples are encouraged to communicate regularly, express their feelings and needs, and listen attentively to their partners' concerns. This is mentioned by God in His word:

مِّنْ مَّوْحَاً اَهْلَةً مِّنْ حَكَمًا فَاَبْعَثُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا شٰفِقًا خَفِيْمًا وَاِنَّ
عَلِيْمًا كَانَ اللّٰهُ اِنَّ بَيْنَهُمَا اللّٰهُ يُوَفِّقُ اِصْلٰحًا يُرِيْدُ اِنْ اَهْلٰهَا
خَبِيْرًا

Meaning: And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Acquainted [with all things]. (Al-Nisa: 35)

They are also taught to be kind and compassionate towards each other, and to forgive each other's mistakes and shortcomings like the words of Allah in Surah Al-Baqarah:

لَهُنَّ فَرَضَتْمْ وَقَدْ تَمَسُوهُنَّ اَنْ قَبِلَ مِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ وَاِنَّ
بِيْدَةِ الَّذِي وَاَبْعَثُوْا اَوْ يَعْفُوْنَ اِنْ اِلَّا فَرَضْتُمْ مَا فَنَصِفُ فَرِيْضَةً
لَّفَضْلًا تَنْسُوْا وَاِلَّا لِلتَّقْوٰی اَقْرَبُ تَعْفُوْا وَاَنْ النِّكَاحِ عَقْدَةٌ
بَصِيْرٌ تَعْمَلُوْنَ بِمَا اللّٰهُ اِنَّ يَنْكَحِبْ

Meaning: And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have already specified for them an obligation, then [give] half of what you specified – unless they forego the right or the one in whose hand is the marriage contract foregoes it. And to forego it is nearer to righteousness. And do not forget graciousness between you. Indeed Allah, of whatever you do, is Seeing.

(Al-Baqarah: 237).

In summary, incorporating Islamic

spirituality into their daily lives can help Muslim couples maintain harmony and strengthen their relationship, even in the face of challenges such as long-distance separation.

b) Faithfully

In order to guarantee harmony in a family, especially between husband and wife, loyalty is the most basic foundation (Fadillah Ismail, 2016) because Islam has set the responsibility of maintaining this loyalty on the shoulders of both of them, meaning that the wife must obey and be loyal to her husband. as well as vice versa according to the guidelines outlined by syarak (Jawiah Dakir, 1996). This was also mentioned by the informant among the approaches to maintain household harmony :

Always keep social boundaries"(01, 04, 06)

Express your love always"(02)

Meetup every weekend"(03, 09)

Minimum physical meetup once a month" (05)

Meetup whenever we are free"(06, 08, 16)

Trust each other"(08, 18, 19)

Reviewing old photos such as wedding photos, vacation photos and children's photos"(14)

Allocate at least once every two weeks to see you partner"(16, 21)

In the holy book al-Quran it is recorded that marriage is like a piece of cloth that covers the husband or wife with warmth, protection and modesty, at the same time the couple needs to provide warmth and comfort to each other (Jawad H. A., 1998).

The words of Allah SWT:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لِهِنَّ

Meaning: they are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them.

(Al-Baqarah: 187)

While according to the law, the third person means anyone, whether a man or a woman consisting of family members of husband or wife, lovers or the surrounding community who are the cause of disharmony in a person's marriage (Syariah Criminal Enactment (Selangor State, 1995) is categorized as a criminal offense. There are

at least 3 sections in Act 559 of the Syariah Criminal Offenses Act (Federal Territories) 1997 Part V - Miscellaneous Offenses related to a third person in a marriage aimed at preserving the harmony of the community in the hope that there will be no division of a household institution. However, the general public still does not know the existence of the provision (Muhammad & Ismail, 2019).

Therefore, to maintain happiness in the household, both must be loyal, honest, forthright and always trust each other. This is important for every couple because it can avoid feelings of prejudice that can divide the integrity of the household.

Maintaining a long-distance marriage can be challenging, and one crucial aspect that contributes to its success is faithfulness. In this regard, research studies have shown that being faithful in a long-distance marriage helps to maintain harmony and strengthen the marital bond.

For example, a study conducted by Stafford and Merolla (2007) examined the effects of long-distance relationships on romantic partners. The study found that trust and faithfulness were significant predictors of the success of long-distance relationships. Partners who were faithful and had high levels of trust in their relationship reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety and depression. Similarly, a study by Dainton and Aylor (2001) found that communication and faithfulness were the most important factors in maintaining a long-distance relationship. The study participants reported that being faithful to their partners helped them to feel secure in their relationship and allowed them to build trust with their partner.

In conclusion, being faithful is a crucial aspect of maintaining a long-distance marriage. Faithfulness helps to build trust, maintain harmony, and strengthen the marital bond. Couples in long-distance marriages should prioritize being faithful and communicating effectively to maintain a healthy and successful relationship.

c) Constant communication.

Communication plays an important role in establishing a relationship between two people. When they exchange information, they are involved in an interaction that creates meaning. That meaning is what connects the two. The more information is shared, the more meaning is formed and the more understanding between each other increases (Aris Amir & Ahmad Rozelan, 2016).

The truth of the content of speech is also an important method when we communicate. The listener's trust and intimacy with us will be destroyed if there is any doubt about the truth of the message being delivered. The words of Allah SWT in Surah al-Ahzab verse 70:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَفُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

Meaning: O believers! Fear God and speak the truth.

Communication is one of the important things in a marriage (Habibi, Vakili, Fadaei, Ansarinejad, Pooravari, & Salehi, 2018; Lavener, Karney, & Bradbury, 2016). A large-scale study that has been conducted in Australia called the Australian Divorce Transition Project also found that miscommunication is one of the factors that cause divorce (Wolcott & Hughes, 1999). Especially for couples practicing long-distance marriages, communication needs to be carried out routinely with the aim of maintaining household harmony. For them, harmony is interpreted as trust and openness between couples (Arina Rubyasih, 2016). This was also stated by most of the informants involved in this study:

Always contact my partner"(01, 02, 08, 12, 13, 17, 18, 22)

Always video call"(03, 04, 05, 07, 10, 14, 16, 24)

Always whatsapp"(05, 07, 16, 18, 24)

Frequently say hello"(09, 23)

Always phone call and facetime"(11)

Always communicate"(20, 21)

Every morning send a simple message saying I love u"(25)

Maintaining a long-distance marriage can be challenging, and one of the key factors that contribute to a successful long-distance marriage is constant communication. According to a study published in the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, couples who communicate more frequently experience greater relationship satisfaction, commitment, and trust (Dainton & Aylor, 2001). Therefore, constant communication is an essential aspect that can help to maintain harmony in a long-distance marriage.

One of the benefits of constant communication in a long-distance marriage is that it helps to create a sense of closeness and intimacy. According to a study conducted by the Journal of Family Communication, frequent communication can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation in long-distance couples (Stafford & Merolla, 2007). Regular communication can help couples feel connected even when they are physically apart, which can promote a sense of intimacy and emotional closeness.

Moreover, constant communication can also help to build trust in a long-distance marriage. When couples communicate regularly, they are more likely to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with each other. This openness and transparency can help to build trust between partners, which is an essential component of a healthy and successful marriage. According to a study published in the Journal of Marriage and Family, trust is a critical factor that contributes to the success of long-distance marriages (Pistole & Roberts, 2002).

Another benefit of constant communication is that it helps to reduce conflicts in a long-distance marriage. When couples communicate regularly, they are more likely to discuss any issues or concerns that arise. By addressing these concerns early on, couples can prevent small problems from escalating into larger conflicts. According to a study published in the Journal of Family Psychology, couples who

engage in frequent communication are less likely to experience conflict in their relationships (Guldner, Swensen, & Friel, 1995).

Finally, constant communication can help to maintain a sense of commitment in a long-distance marriage. When couples communicate regularly, they are more likely to express their love and affection for each other. This expression of love and affection can help to reinforce the couple's commitment to each other and to their marriage. According to a study published in the Journal of Communication, couples who engage in frequent communication are more committed to their relationships than couples who communicate less often (Stafford & Canary, 1991).

In reality, maintaining a long-distance marriage can be challenging, but constant communication is one aspect that can help to maintain harmony in the relationship. Frequent communication can help to create a sense of intimacy, build trust, reduce conflicts, and maintain a sense of commitment. Therefore, couples in long-distance marriages should prioritize constant communication as an essential aspect of their relationship.

d) Responsibility

The integrity of a family depends greatly on how each carries out family responsibilities based on social roles determined by Islam and culture to meet the various needs of the family (Yaacob Harun, 1999, 115-116). The words of Allah SWT:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Meaning: Indeed, God told you to deliver the mandate to those who deserve it, and when you set the law between people you should set it justly. Indeed, Allah is the best who teaches you. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

Refusal to fulfill the rights between spouses in family life can lead to disagreements and fights and can lead to divorce (Syaibah et

al., 2016). For example, the husband as the head of the family is responsible for providing sustenance and acting as a protector for his wife and children (al-Syarbini, 1997), while the wife is the main leader in terms of home care, cooking, cleaning and nurturing the children (Ahmad Karzun, 2007).

A Berita Harian newspaper report dated 4 June 2014 mention that based on the statement of Musa Awang, President of the Syarie Lawyers Association of Malaysia (PGSM) who stated that one of the main causes of divorce is due to the neglect of the husband in providing sustenance to the wife. If this responsibility can be carried out well and sincerely, it will certainly be able to build family harmony. This point was also mentioned by the informant among the approaches to maintain household harmony by:

"Prepare the child's needs such as food, milk and pampers during my absence at home"(03)

"Provide adequate nafkah to spouse"(09)

Alimony is an obligation that must be fulfilled by the husband to the wife in accordance with the provisions in the Quran, the Sunnah, and ijma'. The obligation to provide sustenance is mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ
نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

Meaning: A father's obligation is to feed and clothe mothers in a ma'ruf way. A person is not burdened except according to the level of his ability.

(Al-Baqarah: 233)

The verse above affirms that the father's obligation to feed and clothe the mother in a makruf way, and that is done according to the ability. Further, another verse also affirms:

لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا
آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا

Meaning: It should be a person who is able to provide sustenance according to his ability. And those whose sustenance is limited should provide for themselves from the wealth that God has given them. God

does not burden a person except according to what God gives him.

(Al-Talaq: 7)

According to Imam an-Nawawi, the rights that are obligatory for the wife are seven things namely; i. Food, ii. Ingredients such as spices (onion, cooking oil, salt, sugar, acid including side dishes and so on), iii. Helpers for wives who usually have helpers, iv. Clothes, v. Body cleansers and clothes washers, combs and so on. vi. Home appliances such as bathroom appliances, bed appliances and so on and the last is the place of residence (an-Nawawi, 1983).

While, for couples with children, maintaining a long-distance marriage can be especially challenging. However, a strong sense of responsibility towards children can help to make the separation easier for everyone involved. This includes making sure that children have a sense of stability and routine, even when one parent is stay away.

Research has shown that children who have a strong sense of family support are more resilient in the face of stress and adversity (Conger & Elder, 1994). This means that taking responsibility for maintaining a strong and supportive relationship with children is not only important for their well-being but also for the well-being of the marriage.

Beside that, responsibility to care for parents is also a sacred duty. Even when one is living far away from their parents, maintaining a strong sense of responsibility towards them is important. This includes staying in touch regularly, checking in on their well-being, and offering support when needed. Research has shown that social support from family members, including parents, can help to buffer the negative effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This means that maintaining a strong relationship with parents can not only help to strengthen the long-distance marriage but also provide important emotional support for the individual.

In summary, maintaining a harmonious

long-distance marriage requires a strong sense of responsibility towards spouse, children, and parents. By taking an active role in nurturing these important relationships, couples can build a strong foundation of love, trust, and support that can withstand the challenges of distance and time.

4. Conclusion

The study found that medical practitioners often face unique challenges when it comes to maintaining long-distance marriages. One of the most significant challenges is irregular work schedules, which can make it difficult for spouses to spend time together and maintain a sense of connection. Additionally, physical distance can make it challenging for spouses to provide emotional support to one another and can increase feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Communication barriers can also pose a significant challenge, as busy schedules and different time zones can make it challenging for spouses to find time to talk and connect. Family obligations, such as caring for children or elderly relatives, can add additional stress to an already challenging situation. Financial strain can also be a significant issue, particularly if one spouse is earning significantly more than the other, or if the couple is struggling to make ends meet.

Despite these challenges, the study identified several key aspects that can help medical practitioners maintain long-distance marriage harmony. These include spirituality, which can provide a sense of grounding and purpose, faithfulness, which is essential for building trust and maintaining a strong emotional connection, responsibility, which involves taking ownership of one's actions and behaviors, and constant communication, which is critical for staying connected and building a strong relationship.

By recognizing the challenges of long-distance marriages and focusing on these

key aspects, medical practitioners can build and maintain successful marriages while still pursuing their professional careers. This can help to minimize stress and promote overall well-being, both for themselves and their families

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