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FAMILY INTERACTION, MARITAL QUALITY, AND SIBLING RIVALRY AMONG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The second child is commonly born to a family with school-age children. When this happens, the first child often develops feelings of uneasiness and envy because the parents' love is now divided between the siblings. This study aims to analyze the correlation and influence of marital quality and family interactions on sibling rivalry in families with school-age children. The approach of this study is quantitative with a cross-sectional design. The respondents in this study are the wives of intact families with a first child in the school-age range (6-12 years old) and a second child aged 3-11 years old. Additionally, the families reside in Gunungbatu or Sindangbarang Regency. Non-probability sampling and the purposive technique are used in this study to determine the sample. A study revealed a significant positive correlation between fathers' educational time and family interactions, as well as between family interactions and marital quality. This study also revealed a significant negative correlation between family interactions and marital quality, as well as sibling rivalry. This study also showed a negative influence of marital quality on sibling rivalry.

Keywords: family interactions; family with school-age children; marital quality; sibling rivalry.

INTRODUCTION

According to Law Number 52 of 2009, family is the smallest unit of society consisting of a husband and a wife, or a husband, wife, and their children, or a father and his children, or a mother and her children. As the primary and foremost place of learning for their child, the family must be of good quality. A quality family is formed through a legal marriage, a marriage conducted according to the laws of the respective religions and beliefs of the couple, and is registered by applicable regulations (Law Number 16 of 2019). Characteristics of a quality family, according to Law Number 52 of 2009, include prosperity, health, progressiveness, independence, an ideal number of children, forward thinking, responsibility, harmony, and devotion to God Almighty. Gunarsa (2002) stated that harmony or a good atmosphere in the family can be created by increasing the happiness of the husband and wife when emotional conflicts arise that need to be addressed. Conger et al. (1990) also stated that, besides happiness, satisfaction with the marriage is another factor in marital quality.

Marital quality refers to the degree of marriage that provides happiness and well-being to the couple, thereby maintaining the sustainability of the marriage (Puspitawati, 2012). Marital quality refers to the satisfaction and happiness experienced by the couple. Marital quality also serves as a basis for assessing family integrity and sustainability, which is an important aspect of a family's well-being. Additionally, marital quality affects the caregiving environment provided to the children. In line with this, Cox et al. (2008) stated that the quality of the parent relationship

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within the family greatly influences caregiving. Good marital quality also requires effective communication and interaction within the family, especially between spouses. This interaction includes parent-child interactions and sibling interactions. Volling (2008) mentioned that dissatisfaction in marriage and marital conflict can lead to sibling conflict. Puspitawati and Setioningsih (2011) also found that family interactions influence children's conditions, including social skills, stress level, and academic achievements. Gunarsa (2002) stated that the parent-child relationship is more easily formed because parents are obliged to care for and nurture the child, leading to more time spent with the child. A child who laughs often with their parents, cares about what their parents say, and is well-understood by their parents indicates good parent-child interaction (Rachman et al., 2020). McHael et al. (2012) conducted research that found sibling interactions tend to be poor if the relationship between the parents is poor.

Sibling interactions within the family indicate the presence of sibling relationships. The type of interactions that occur can be influenced by the number of children in the family (Clara & Wardani, 2020). Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2023 publication recorded that the birth rate in Indonesia in 2022 was 2.18. This indicates that the average number of children born to a woman during her fertile years is typically 2 to 3. This birthrate shows that the average family in Indonesia in 2022 has at least two children. Duvall and Miller (1985) also stated that family interactions can be either harmonious or not. The presence of a sibling for the first child leads to changes that require the first child to share with their sibling, especially in terms of parents' affection. Volling (2008) mentioned that sibling rivalry generally involves competition among siblings for parental affection, acceptance, and recognition. Rahmawati (2013) also stated that the first child tends to feel discomfort and jealousy towards their sibling because they feel unfairness in receiving affection from their parents. This feeling is referred to as sibling rivalry.

A child who starts attending elementary school will begin to feel the importance of peers. When a child brings various negative emotions accumulated from school and peers back home, and is unable to release them at school, they hope to release these emotions at home. Parent's inability to facilitate the child in this can lead the child to keep these emotions to themselves. Open interaction can reduce the development of destructive behaviors resulting from the accumulation of these emotions (Duvall & Miller, 1985). In line with this, Gunarsa (2002) stated that reciprocal relationships with the child need to be nurtured and maintained. Sutirna (2013) also stated that a child who receives affection and appreciation will show a happy character, loving behavior, and have healthy relationships with those around them. On the other hand, when they do not receive affection, they will show withdrawal, hatred, hostility, anxiety, and aggressiveness towards. Duvall and Miller (1985) stated that parental openness and acceptance of the feelings that arise within the family can influence the negative emotions experienced by the child, including jealousy towards siblings. Duvall added that a child who does not have the opportunity or is not accustomed to open interactions will tend to withdraw and isolate themselves from family members. The phenomenon of sibling rivalry is prone to occur if these negative emotions develop in the child. Sibling rivalry can arise in children during the preschool years, at school age, during adolescence, or even in adulthood.

Volling (2008) stated that during the school-age years, children interact more frequently with their siblings than with their parents or peers. However, research on sibling rivalry is rarely conducted on school-age children and is more commonly done with preschool children and adolescents. Based on the background, this study aims to: 1) identify the family and child characteristics, marital quality, family interactions, and sibling rivalry in families with school-age children; 2) analyze the relationship between family and child characteristics, marital quality, family interactions, and sibling rivalry in families with school-age children; 3) analyze the influence of family and child characteristics, marital quality and family interactions on sibling rivalry in families with school-age children.

METHOD

Participants

The study is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design. The research employed a questionnaire-based interview method. This research was conducted from May to June 2024. Research samples were taken non-probabilistically using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select Sindangbarang and Gunungbatu regencies, as both regencies have the most significant number of elementary school-age children in Bogor City. The respondent criteria are the wife of an intact family with two or more children, the first child in the elementary school age category (6-12 years), and the second child's age in the range of 3 to 11 years old. The study sample included 33 wives.

Measurement

Family interactions are reciprocal relationships between family members that influence each other (Liedfray et al., 2022). The family interactions include husband-wife interactions, mother-child interactions, father-child interactions, and sibling interactions between first and second children. The Family Interactions questionnaire is based on the Chuang (2005) questionnaire, which has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.852. This questionnaire consists of 24 items for each interaction and uses a 4-point Likert scale, namely 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Often, 4 = Always.

Marital quality refers to the degree to which a marriage can provide happiness and well-being for the couple, thereby maintaining the sustainability of the marriage (Puspitawati, 2012). Marital quality encompasses both marriage satisfaction and marital happiness. Marital quality was measured using the Marital Quality Questionnaire by Conger et al., which was adopted and modified by Sunarti et al. (2005). The questionnaire consists of 40 items and has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.916, using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

Sibling rivalry refers to the competition that occurs between siblings, often between the firstborn and the secondborn (Rahmawati, 2013). The sibling rivalry questionnaire utilizes the sibling rivalry instrument developed by Vevandi and Tairas (2015), based on Boyle's theory (1999). The questionnaire consists of 45 items, using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Often, 4 = Always. The Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire is 0,958.

Analysis

The primary data collected were processed in the sequence of entry, cleaning, scoring, coding, and editing. Data analysis and interpretation will be conducted thereafter. The process and analysis utilized Microsoft Office Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26 for Windows. Analysis includes descriptive analysis, correlation test, and multiple linear regression tests. Descriptive analysis is used to identify characteristics of the family and children, marital quality, family interactions, and sibling rivalry in the respondent's family. Minimum and maximum values, average values, and standard deviation were identified. Correlation test to analyze the correlations between the variables and a regression test to analyze the influence of the other variables on sibling rivalry. The scores of each respondent were categorized using Bloom's Cut-Off (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2019): ≤59 is categorized as low, 60-79 is categorized as moderate, and ≥80 is categorized as high.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Family and Child Characteristics

The results of this study show that the majority (80%) of the wives are in the early adulthood age group, while the remaining 20% are in the middle adulthood group, with an average age of 34.97 years. Most husbands are also in the early adulthood group (56.7%), with the rest in the middle adulthood group (43.3%). More than half (63.3%) of the wives have 10-12 years of education or equivalent to high school level. In contrast, 20 percent have a college-level education, and 16.7 percent have a junior high school level education. Meanwhile, 60 percent of husbands have 10-12 years of education, with the remaining 40 percent spread across categories of no education, junior high school, and college-level education. The majority (80%) of wives work as homemakers. The husbands' occupations are mostly as laborers (36.7%) and private sector employees (23.3%). Most of the family's monthly incomes (70%) fall in the range of Rp1,000,001 to Rp3,000,000, with an average monthly income of Rp3,420,000. Half (50%) of the respondents have been married for 11-15 years, while the rest have been married for 6-10 years (30%) and more than 15 years (20%). The family size is distributed between four members (46.7%) and 5-7 members (53.3%), meaning that more families have more than two children. More than half (60%) of the first and second children have different genders, while the remaining 40% have the same gender. The age gap between the first and second child is mostly more than 5 years (46.7%), followed by 1-2 years (16.7%) and 3-4 years (36.7%).

Family Interactions

The average of the Family Interactions Index is 68.53, indicating that the family interactions in the sample fall into the moderate category. However, there are still families with low family interactions (13.3%). This is reflected in the moderate level of interaction between husbands and wives, mothers and children, fathers and children, and first-born children and second-born children. By dimension, the most significant percentage of husband-wife interaction falls into the moderate category (76.7%), with an average index of 68.53. The mother-child interaction dimension average index is 72.69, falling into the moderate category. The majority of the sample (80%) falls into the moderate category for the father-child interaction dimension, with an average father-child interaction index of 71.81. The interaction dimension between the first and second child falls into the moderate category, with an average index of 60.42

Table 1 Respondents Distribution on Categories, Minimum and Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Family Interactions Variable.

Family Interactions	Category						Min-Max	Mean±SD
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Family Interactions	4	13,3	26	86,7	0	0,0	55,00-77,00	68,53±6,13
Husband-Wife Interaction	5	16,7	23	76,7	2	6,7	47,22-84,72	68,91±8,64
Mother-Child Interaction	1	3,3	25	83,3	4	13,3	59,72-81,94	72,96±6,21
Father-Child Interaction	3	10,0	24	80,0	3	10,0	56,94-86,11	71,81±7,32
First-Second Child Interaction	13	43,3	17	56,7	0	0,0	34,72-75,00	60,42±9,93

Source: Researcher's Data, 2024.

Marital Quality

Descriptive analysis shows that the marital quality has an average index of 71.08, which is then categorized as moderate. However, 20% of families are categorized as low and 30% as high. Moderate marital quality is indicated by respondents who do not have issues with their partner's work and report always having discussions on various matters. Respondents also mention never having suspicions of their partner cheating. Conflict with a partner regarding child-rearing is also reported.

Based on the dimensions, the most significant percentage of marital satisfaction falls into the moderate category (60%), followed by the high category (30%), with an average index of 73.38. The distribution of respondents in the marital happiness dimension shows that most respondents (43.3%) fall into the moderate category, with an average index of 68.77.

Table 2 Respondents Distribution on Categories, Minimum and Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Marital Quality Variable.

Marital Quality	Category						Min-Max	Mean±SD
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Marital Quality	6	20,0	15	50,0	9	30,0	48,00-91,00	71,08±12,86
Marital Satisfaction	3	10,0	18	60,0	9	30,0	45,33-96,67	73,38±13,14
Marital Happiness	7	23,3	13	43,3	10	33,3	40,00-88,33	68,77±14,95

Source: Researcher's Data, 2024.

Sibling Rivalry

The distribution of the sibling rivalry variable shows that all respondents fall into the low category (100%) with an average index of 9.58. Low sibling is indicated by the first child's behavior when the second child excels; the first child rarely feels proud when the second child achieves something. Based on dimensions, all respondents (100%) indicate that the first child shows low levels of anxiety, anger, and jealousy. This condition is reflected in the first child always congratulating the second child when they want to participate in or win a competition. However, in the dimensions of affection and dislike, some respondents fall into the moderate category. This is indicated by the majority of the first children (86.7%) who did not wish that their parents had time with their siblings. The first child rarely shows jealousy when the second child wants to play with the parents and does not hold a grudge towards the parents when they spend time only with the second child.

Table 3 Respondents Distribution on Categories, Minimum and Maximum Values, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Sibling Rivalry Variable.

Sibling Rivalry	Category						Min-Max	Mean±SD
	Low		Moderate		High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Sibling Rivalry	30	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	1,00-38,00	9,58±10,04
Love and Hate	29	96,7	1	3,3	0	0,0	0,00-60,00	15,44±16,71
Anxiousness	30	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0,00-41,67	10,83±10,48
Anger	30	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0,00-35,08	5,26±9,09
Jealousy	30	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0,00-45,8	10,41±11,51

Source: Researcher's Data, 2024.

Correlations

The results of the correlation tests indicate that the family characteristic variable, specifically the husband's education level, is positively and significantly related ($r = 0.364$, $p < 0.05$) to family interaction. This means that as the husband's education level increases, so does the family interaction. There is also a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$) between family interaction and marital quality. This suggests that higher family interaction is associated with higher marital quality between spouses. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between family interaction and sibling rivalry among respondents ($r = -0.468$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that as family interaction increases, sibling rivalry between the first and second children tends to decrease. A significant negative relationship was also found between marital quality and sibling rivalry ($r = -0.563$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as marital quality improves, sibling rivalry between the first and second children decreases.

Table 4 Correlation Coefficients of Family Characteristics, Child Characteristics, Family Interaction, Marital Quality, and Sibling Rivalry.

Variable	Family Interactions	Marital Quality	Sibling Rivalry
Wife's age (years)	-0,226	-0,029	0,137
Wife's education time (years)	0,005	0,101	0,069
Husband's education time (years)	**0,364***	0,108	0,018
Family income (Rupiah/month)	0,046	0,135	0,217
Family size (person)	-0,338	-0,311	0,166
Children gender status (0=different; 1= same)	0,089	-0,155	0,065
First and second child age difference (years)	0,220	-0,022	-0,331
Family interactions	1	**0,473****	**-0,468****
Marital Quality	**0,473****	1	**-0,563****
Sibling rivalry	**-0,468****	**-0,563****	1

Source: Researcher's Data, 2024.

Influences

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that marital quality has a significant adverse effect on sibling rivalry ($\beta = -0.526$; $p = 0.014$). This indicates that for each one-unit increase in marital quality, sibling rivalry between the first and second children decreases by 0.410. The result has an adjusted R-squared (R^2) value of 0.308. This means that the variables of wife's age, wife's education level, husband's education level, family income, family size, gender status, age gap between the first and second children, family interaction, and marital quality account for 30.8% of the variation, while the remaining 69.2% is influenced by other variables not examined in this study.

Table 5 Regression coefficient of Family Characteristics, Child Characteristics, Family Interaction, Marital Quality, and Sibling Rivalry.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta (β)	Sig.
Wife's age (years)	0,212	0,374	0,119	0,577
Wife's education time (years)	-0,670	0,993	-0,675	0,508
Husband's education time (years)	0,024	0,707	0,008	0,974
Family income (Rupiah/month)	1,051E-6	0,000	0,233	0,267

Table 5 Regression coefficient of Family Characteristics, Child Characteristics, Family Interaction, Marital Quality, and Sibling Rivalry.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta (β)	Sig.
Family size (person)	-1,576	3,150	-0,089	0,622
Children gender status (0=different; 1= same)	0,720	3,416	0,036	0,835
First and second child age difference (years)	-1,689	1,082	-0,305	0,134
Family interactions	-0,281	0,383	-0,172	0,471
Marital Quality	-0,410	0,152	-0,526	**0,014**
R^2			0,523	
Adjusted R^2			0,308	
F			2,432	
Sig.			0,045	

Source: Researcher's Data, 2024.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that family interaction is categorized as moderate. The status of family members can lead to differences in the interactions that occur and their quality. Chuang (2005) found that differences in the status of parents and children result in varying reciprocity in family interactions. In husband-wife interactions, reciprocity is more frequent and of higher quality because the status of husband and wife is the same, namely, as parents. In contrast to husband-wife interactions, reciprocity in parent-child interactions, whether between fathers and children or mothers and children, tends to be less frequent. This arises because of norms; children are expected to show respect to parents, but parents are not necessarily expected to show respect to children. This study found different results, with higher parent-child interactions and lower husband-wife interactions. This is because the status of parents, which should be the same, feels different and divided into the status of husband and the status of wife. Respondents indicated that husband-wife interactions, particularly in terms of showing affection, are less common, whereas parent-child interactions occur more frequently. Other than showing affection, in discussions or debates, the wife tends to remain silent and yield.

The marital quality in this study is categorized as moderate. Puspitawati (2012) noted that the achievements of both spouses in their careers can impact the quality of their marriage. This study found that the work achievements of the spouses varied. Respondents indicated that in certain situations, they felt dissatisfied with what they had and complained to their partner; however, this did not lead to dissatisfaction with their partner's achievements. Respondents also acknowledged that these complaints did not result in conflicts. Some respondents reported that their relationship with their in-laws was poor, which negatively impacted their perceived marital satisfaction. This finding aligns with Serewicz et al. (2014), who discovered that the openness between a spouse and in-laws affects marital satisfaction. In other words, the more open the relationship between a spouse and in-laws, the higher the marital satisfaction is felt by the spouse. Additionally, Altafiah et al. (2024) also found that a good relationship with the partner's family, especially in-laws, allows the spouse to receive emotional and social support from the in-laws. Moreover, in-laws can also provide financial assistance.

The results of this study show that sibling rivalry is categorized as low. Firdaus and Fitriasari (2019) found that children with a larger age difference are less likely to develop sibling rivalry. A minor age difference (1-3 years) indicates stronger sibling rivalry compared to children with an age difference of more than three years. This is reflected in this study, where most respondents

with a first and second child age difference of over three years resulted in low measured sibling rivalry. In line with this, Xiao et al. (2023) also found that with a larger age difference, the first child is more willing to share and interact with their sibling. Leung and Wobson (1991) stated that reducing sibling rivalry involves minimizing comparisons between children regarding academic intelligence, physical traits, or aspects of achievement. Jealousy or anger can arise in children when they are frequently compared to their siblings in these aspects. Only a few respondents reported comparing the first child with the second; however, the first child did not exhibit high levels of sibling rivalry. Other respondents reported efforts to reduce comparing their children and recognizing the differences in how each child reacts when compared to their sibling. Sibling rivalry is also categorized as low because respondents reported that all first children show affection towards their siblings. The first child also never considers themselves an only child and acknowledges the presence of their sibling.

The correlation test results show a significant positive relationship between the husband's educational level and family interaction. Based on these results, it can be explained that the higher the husband's educational level, the better the family interactions. This finding is consistent with Holmes and Huston (2010), who found that fathers' educational level is positively related to father-child interaction, particularly in aspects related to the child's academic and social development. This is because fathers with lower educational levels tend to have more conservative perceptions and view their preschool-age children as having lower social skills. Positive interaction between a more conservative father and his child typically emerges when the child reaches elementary school age. Additionally, a positive relationship was found between father-child interaction and mother-child interaction, as well as husband-wife interaction. This indicates that as the quality of father-child interaction improves, there is also a corresponding improvement in mother-child interaction and husband-wife interaction.

A significant positive correlation was also found between family interactions and marital quality in the correlation test. This suggests that the better the family interactions, the higher the marital quality. Previous findings (Erel & Burman, 1995; Korja et al., 2016) have shown a positive relationship between family interaction and marital quality. The stress caused by poor marital quality can lead to deteriorating parent-child interaction as parents may project their stress onto their children or interact with them while carrying negative emotions. Similarly, poor parent-child interactions can lower marital quality.

The correlation test results then showed a significant negative relationship between family interaction and sibling rivalry. This means that the better the family interactions, the lower the sibling rivalry that arises. Sawicki (1997) mentioned that sibling rivalry can be reduced through better parent-child interaction. Improved parent-child interactions provide a supportive environment and effective parenting, ensuring each child feels safe and loved. Positive interactions between the first and second child can reduce competition between them, thereby decreasing the likelihood of sibling rivalry. Older siblings' participation in the care of their younger siblings can also reduce the sibling rivalry they feel. Additionally, in good interactions, older siblings often serve as role models for their younger siblings (Tsukada, 1979).

A significant negative relationship was found between marital quality and sibling rivalry. This suggests that as marital quality improves, sibling rivalry tends to decrease. In line with this, Stocker et al. (2006) found that wives who feel dissatisfied or unhappy with their marriage exhibit more aggressive behavior towards their children, and the children also report experiencing sibling rivalry. Additionally, the way a wife expresses her emotions to her children also affects sibling rivalry. Negative emotions expressed by mothers to their children can make it difficult for the children to regulate their own emotions. In this study, wives reported being satisfied and happy with their marriage. They also mentioned that any problems with their husbands are resolved without displaying conflict in front of or with the children.

The regression test results indicate a significant negative relationship between marital quality and sibling rivalry. In line with this, Yu and Gamble (2008) found that good parental marital quality influences the relationships children have with their siblings. Good marital quality and warm parental relationships lead to warmer and more positive relationships between children. Additionally, marital quality can impact the parenting provided to children. Different parenting styles are also related to the relationships between children. Good sibling relationships are indicated by reduced sibling rivalry. This study did not find an effect of family interaction on sibling rivalry, although family interaction includes dimensions such as the interaction between the first and second child. This may be because family interactions encompass interactions among all core family members, including husband-wife, father-child, mother-child, and interactions between the first and second child. These interactions within the family are closely related to the marital quality experienced by the parents. Additionally, husband-wife interaction also has a significant positive effect on marital quality (Herawati & Nurajizah, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The ages of the wife and husband fall into the early adulthood category. The ages of children fall into the preschool and elementary school categories. The educational levels of the wife and husband are equivalent to a high school education. The majority of husbands work as laborers or private sector employees to meet the family's needs, while the wives' education is often focused on homemaking. All respondents' monthly family income is above Bogor City's poverty line in 2024, which is greater than Rp699,861. The marriage length ranges from 7 to 23 years. The number of family members indicates the family size is small (consisting of 4 people) to medium (5-7 people). The gender status of the first and second child is different primarily (60%), and the rest are the same gender. The average gap between the first and second children is 4.43 years. Marital quality is considered moderate, as well as family interactions. Sibling rivalry is categorized as low.

Correlation test results show a significant positive relationship between the husband's educational level and family interactions. Family interactions are found to be significantly positively related to marital quality and significantly negatively related to sibling rivalry. Marital quality is also found to be significantly negatively related to sibling rivalry. Multiple linear regression tests show that marital quality has a negative influence on sibling rivalry.

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