

# Husband-wife interaction, verbal communication, and subjective well-being in fishermen's families on the South Coast, West Java, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Fishermen's families on the south coast of West Java live in an environment influenced by economic uncertainty and challenging natural conditions. Effective husband-wife interaction and verbal communication are key to shaping their subjective well-being amidst the pressures of life they face. This study aims to analyze the correlation between family characteristics, husband-wife interaction, and verbal communication on the subjective well-being of fishermen's families. The study was conducted in the coastal areas of Sukabumi, Pangandaran, and Garut, West Java, Indonesia. The study used a quantitative method with purposive sampling involving 228 fishermen's wives as respondents. Descriptive and correlation analyses were conducted in this study. The results showed that the wife's education ( $p<0.05$ ) and husband-wife interaction ( $p<0.05$ ) were significantly positively correlated with family subjective well-being. At the same time, verbal violence was significantly negatively correlated ( $p<0.05$ ) with family subjective well-being. Husband-wife interaction was significantly positively correlated ( $p<0.05$ ) with verbal affection and age of marriage and negatively correlated with verbal violence. In addition, the wife's education was significantly positively correlated ( $p<0.05$ ) with verbal violence. The study's implications can be a basis for the government and local organizations in designing family empowerment programs that strengthen positive communication and interaction between husband and wife to improve the subjective well-being of fishermen's families.

## 1 Introduction

Fishing families play an essential role in the social and economic structure of coastal communities in Indonesia, including in the southern coastal region of West Java. As the backbone of the local economy, the lives of fishing families are heavily influenced by unstable employment conditions, dependence on seasons, and limited access to social and

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economic facilities. These factors affect the economic well-being and the subjective well-being of fishing families, i.e., how family members rate their happiness, life satisfaction, and the quality of their interpersonal relationships. The well-being of fishermen is generally at a very low level and is often identified with poverty. This is due to the dependence of the fishing profession on uncertain sea conditions and the threat of extreme weather and natural disasters that can disrupt the smooth running of fishing activities. Widespread poverty among fishing communities impacts the low level of their social well-being [1].

In the family context, husband-wife interaction and verbal communication are essential in shaping family subjective well-being. Good interactions between husband and wife can create mutual understanding, emotional support, and psychological stability, all of which contribute to the marital well-being of the family [2]. Communication is essential in human life, as it relates to almost all aspects of life, including relationships between married couples. Verbal communication carried out by family members affects the satisfaction of family members [3]. However, interaction and communication patterns in fishermen's families are often challenged due to life pressures, such as heavy workloads, long work duration, and income uncertainty. This situation can cause tension in the husband-wife relationship, affecting the family's overall subjective well-being. Verbal violence that occurs to a person will reduce relationship satisfaction and emotional needs [4].

Previous research suggests that good verbal communication and conjugal interaction between spouses can be essential determinants in building a family's subjective well-being. However, specific research on fishermen's families in the south coast area of West Java is still limitedly investigated. This study aims to analyze the correlation between spousal interaction and verbal communication with family subjective well-being in fishing families on the south coast of West Java. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of fishing families and policy recommendations that support the well-being of coastal families.

## **2 Research Methods**

### **2.1 Design, location, and sample of the research**

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional study design to analyze the relationship between variables at one point. This study was conducted in three coastal areas in West Java Province, namely Sukabumi, Garut, and Pangandaran. The selection of research locations was made purposively, considering the area's characteristics relevant to the research topic: coastal regions with a large population of fishermen. The respondents of this study included 76 fishermen's wives from each region. Hence, the total sample of this study was 228 fishermen's wives, who were selected purposively, with the main criteria being the wives of fishermen living in the coastal area.

### **2.2 Variable and data collection**

This study examines three main variables: husband-wife interaction, verbal communication, and subjective well-being. The verbal communication variable is divided into two main dimensions, namely verbal violence and verbal affection, each of which describes the pattern of verbal communication in the family. Meanwhile, subjective well-being is measured through three main aspects, namely physical-economic, social, and psychological well-being, which includes various subjective dimensions. Experience related to the respondents' quality of life. The primary data used in this study were collected through direct interviews with respondents using a structured questionnaire. Husband-wife interaction was measured

using a questionnaire modified from Chuang 2005 [5], which consists of 12 question items with a Likert answer scale of 0-2, where 0 means "never," 1 means "sometimes," and 2 means "often." Family communication was measured through two dimensions, namely verbal violence and verbal affection, which included a total of 10 question items: 6 items for verbal abuse and 4 items for verbal affection. The instrument used was modified from the Verbal Abuse Scale developed by Polcari, Rabi, Bolger, and Teicher 2014 [6], with a 0-2 Likert response scale (0 = "never," 1 = "sometimes," 2 = "often"). Subjective well-being was measured using a questionnaire modified from Sunarti 2020 [7], which consists of 15 question items with a Likert answer scale of 0-2, where 0 means "dissatisfied," 1 means "less satisfied," and 2 means "satisfied."

### 2.3 Data analysis

The data obtained through the questionnaire was then processed using Microsoft Excel software, including data input, coding, scoring, and index calculation. Furthermore, data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Data analysis was carried out using a descriptive analysis approach to describe the data distribution, calculate the average value, and measure the standard deviation of each variable studied. Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the strength and direction of the relationship between family characteristics and the variables observed in this study.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Fisherman's family characteristic

Table 1 shows that the characteristics of fisher families on the South Coast show that most wives are in the age range of 21 to 40 years, with an average age of 36.28 years. On the other hand, most husbands are in the age range of 41 to 60 years, with an average age of 41 years. Most southern coastal women act as housewives, while husbands work as fishermen, laborers, or crew members.

**Table 1.** Family characteristics of fisherman's families

Characteristics	Mean
Age of Marriage (year)	18.13
Wife's Age (year)	36.28
Husband's Age (year)	41.14
Wife's income (IDR)	1163135.96
Husband's income (IDR)	7646052.63
Family income (IDR)	7660394.74
Wife's education (year)	7.91
Husband's education (year)	2.491

**Table 1.** Family characteristics of fisherman's families (*continue*)

Characteristics	Mean
<b>Wife's job</b>	
Housewife	71.9
Fish traders	1.8
Traders	20.6
Fish processors	1.3
Others	4.4
Total	100.0
<b>Husband's Job</b>	
Labor fishermen/the crew	63.6
Fisherman owner/master	36.4
Total	100.0

Note: IDR: Indonesian Rupiah

The education level of husbands and wives in the south of the coastal area is generally limited to the primary school level, with an average length of education of 7 years each. Nevertheless, there is a small percentage of respondents who did not pursue formal education at all, as well as some respondents who have education up to university level. In addition, the results showed that the husband's income for around half of the respondents was in the range of Rp1,000,001 to Rp5,000,000, with an average husband's income of Rp6,497,256.77. Meanwhile, the wife's average income was recorded at Rp1,163,135.95.

### 3.2 Husband-wife interaction

Table 2 shows that the results of the analysis of husband-wife interaction in fishing families on the south coast showed that the Friendly-Submission dimension recorded the highest percentage, with 90.4% of respondents feeling safe (trusting) when their husbands had to make crucial decisions. In addition, 89.5% of respondents revealed that they never wanted to take revenge against their husband's actions. Nonetheless, 54.8% of respondents sometimes felt very upset with their husbands. In the Affection dimension, the highest percentage was found in wives who enjoyed helping their husbands (67.1%). On the Friendly-Dominance dimension, 87.7% of respondents revealed that wives often remind their husbands what to do. On the hostile-dominance dimension, 38.2% of respondents reported that wives sometimes get angry when their husbands do not fulfill their wishes.

Furthermore, 54.8% of respondents felt very upset with their husbands on the Hostility dimension, although this only happened sometimes. On the Hostile-Submission dimension, 50.9% of respondents stated that husbands often criticized or reprimanded wives. The table also confirmed that respondents felt safe and trusted when husbands had to make crucial decisions (90.4%).

**Table 2.** Distribution of husband-wife interaction in fishing families on the south coast

Item	Fisherman’s wife (n=228)			
	N (%)	S (%)	O (%)	Mean
<b>Love (nurturing)</b>				
1. Expressions of affection	11.4	37.7	50.9	1.39
2. Happy to help husband	14.5	18.4	67.1	1.53
<b>Directing (friendly dominance)</b>				
3. Make important decisions for husband	25.4	27.2	47.4	1.22
4. Remind husband	3.5	8.8	87.7	1.84
<b>Domineering (Hostile-Dominance)</b>				
5. Gets angry to husband	32.9	38.2	28.9	0.96
6. Asks husband to be quiet	66.2	16.7	17.1	0.51
<b>Hostility</b>				
7. Wants revenge for what her husband has done	89.5	7.9	2.6	0.13
8. Feel very annoyed	23.2	54.8	21.9	0.99
<b>Submissive (Hostile-Submission)</b>				
9. Expressing views when disagreeing with husband	29.4	24.6	46.1	1.17
10. Husband criticizes or reprimands, but you remain silent.	18.4	30.7	50.9	1.32
<b>Respect (Friendly-Submission)</b>				
11. Feel safe when husband has to make important decisions	7.0	13.6	79.4	1.72
12. Feel safe when husband has to make important decisions	1.3	8.3	90.4	1.89
<b>Husband-wife interaction</b>	Min-Max= 41.67 – 95.83 Mean= 72.91			

Note: N: never, S: Sometimes, O: Often, Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum

Table 3 shows that the results of the interaction category analysis showed that husband-wife interaction in this study was classified as moderate, with a percentage of 63.65% and an average category distribution of 72.91%. In addition, a small portion of husband-wife interaction falls into the low category, which is 13.2%.

**Table 3.** Category distribution of family husband-wife interaction

Category	Verbal affection		Min-Max	Mean±STD
	n	n		
Low	30	13.2	41.67 – 95.83	72.91 ± 10.77
Moderate	145	63.6		
High	53	23.2		

Note: Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, STD: Deviation Standard

### 3.3 Verbal affection

Table 4 shows that the analysis of the verbal affection category in fishermen families on the south coast shows that the highest distribution is in the verbal affection of husbands to wives, with 69.7% of respondents reporting that husbands often speak softly and affectionately to their spouses. On the contrary, the lowest distribution is found in the verbal affection of wives to husbands, where 50.9% of respondents stated that wives never call their husbands by their favorite names. In addition, the verbal affection of husbands to wives also showed a low distribution, with 51.3% of respondents reporting that husbands never call their wives by their favorite names. The analysis of the verbal affection category in coastal fishermen

families shows that verbal affection distribution is still relatively low, at 44.7%, with an average distribution of 61.29%. This finding indicates the need for improvement in the disclosure of verbal affection in the family.

**Table 4.** Distribution of verbal affection categories in fishing families on the South Coast

Item	Fisherman’s wife (n=228)			
	N (%)	S (%)	O (%)	Mean
<b>Verbal affection between wife and husband</b>				
1. Expressing love	23.2	41.7	35.1	1.12
2. Giving compliments.	20.6	40.4	39	1.18
3. Speaking softly	4.4	26.8	68.9	1.64
4. Call the partner by their favorite name.	50.9	10.5	38.6	0.88
<b>Verbal affection husband to wife</b>				
5. Expressing love	24.6	32.9	42.5	1.18
6. Giving compliments.	18.0	36.4	45.6	1.28
7. Speaking softly	4.8	25.4	69.7	1.65
8. Call the partner by their favorite name.	51.3	9.6	39.0	0.88
<b>Verbal affection Total</b>	Min-Max: 0.00 – 100.00 Mean = 61,29			

Note: N: never, S: Sometimes, O: Often, Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum

Table 5 shows that the analysis of verbal affection categories in coastal fishermen’s families shows that verbal affection distribution is still relatively low, amounting to 44.7%, with an average distribution of 61.29%. This finding indicates the need for improvement in the disclosure of verbal affection in the family.

**Table 5.** Distribution of verbal categories of family affection

Category	Verbal affection		Min-Max	Mean±STD
	n	n		
Low	102	44.7	0.00 – 100.00	61.29 ± 24.42
Moderate	77	33.8		
High	49	21.5		

Note: Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, STD: Deviation Standard

### 3.4 Verbal violence

Table 6 shows that the results of the analysis of the distribution of verbal violence answers in fishermen families on the south coast show that the highest distribution occurs in verbal violence committed by wives against husbands, namely often criticizing their spouses, with a percentage of 0.64%. In contrast, the lowest distribution occurs in verbal violence by wives against husbands in the form of threats and torture, with a rate of 98.2%. However, the results also show that there is still the use of bad words, insulting the spouse, blaming each other, unconstructive criticism, and raising the voice between husbands and wives in their interactions.

**Table 6.** Verbal distribution of violence in fishing families on the south coast

Item	Fisherman's wife (n=228)			
	N (%)	S (%)	O (%)	Mean
<b>Verbal violence between wife and husband</b>				
1 Scolding with bad words	71.1	24.6	4.4	0.33
2 Insulting partners	95.2	3.5	1.3	0.06
3 Threatening to hurt.	98.2	1.8	0.0	0.02
4 Blaming partner for things not done	67.1	25.4	7.5	0.40
5 Criticizing partners	50.4	34.6	14.9	0.64
6 Raising voice/yelling	68.0	23.2	8.8	0.41
<b>Verbal violence between husband to wife</b>				
1 Scolding with bad words	76.3	21.9	1.8	0.25
2 Insulting partners	95.2	3.9	0.9	0.06
3 Threatening to hurt.	97.8	2.2	-	0.02
4 Blaming partner for things not done	70.2	25.4	4.4	0.34
5 Criticizing partners	54.8	34.2	11.0	0.56
6 Raising voice/yelling	72.8	21.1	6.1	0.33
<b>Verbal Violence Total</b>	Min-Max= 0 – 75.00 Mean= 14.43			

Note: N: never, S: Sometimes, O: Often, Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum

Table 7 shows that the results showed that the distribution of verbal violence categories in fishermen families on the south coast was mainly low, which amounted to 98.7%. However, 1.3% of respondents still fall into the medium category.

**Table 7.** Distribution of verbal categories of family violence

Category	Verbal affection		Min-Max	Mean±STD
	n	n		
Low	225	98.7	0.00 – 75.00	14.43 ± 15.26
Moderate	3	1.3		
High	0	0		

Note: Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, STD: Deviation Standard

### 3.5 Family subjective well-being

Table 8 shows that the analysis of the distribution of answers regarding the well-being of fisher families in the southern coastal area shows that the highest average is found in the physical well-being dimension, where 98.2% of families feel prosperous with the availability of water around them. In contrast, the lowest average is found in the economic well-being dimension, with 46.5% of families expressing dissatisfaction with their financial condition.

**Table 8.** Distribution of family subjective well-being among fishing families on the south coast

Item	Fisherman's wife (n=228)			Mean
	D (%)	L (%)	S (%)	
<b>Physical well-being</b>				
1 Health condition of family members	1.8	12.3	86.0	1.84
2 Diversity of daily food types	2.2	10.5	87.3	1.85
3 Condition/quality of residence	4.4	25	70.6	1.66
4 Availability of water in the surrounding area	4	1.3	98.2	1.98
<b>Economic well-being</b>				
5 Family financial situation	5.7	46.5	47.8	1.42

**Table 8.** Distribution of family subjective well-being among fishing families on the south coast (continue)

Item	Fisherman's wife (n=228)			Mean
	D (%)	L (%)	S (%)	
6 Husband's employment situation	3.1	25.9	71.1	1.68
7 Husband's income situation	3.1	40.4	56.6	1.54
8 Assets/material owned situation	7.5	35.5	57.0	1.50
<b>Social well-being</b>				
9 Children's educational achievements	7.5	23.7	68.9	1.61
10 Communication with husband	0.9	3.5	95.6	1.95
11 Communication with siblings or extended family	2.2	7.9	89.9	1.88
12 Communication with neighbors/surrounding community	2.2	5.3	92.5	1.90
<b>Psychological well-being</b>				
13 Religious practice of family members	2.2	11.8	86.0	1.84
14 Children's behavior	2.6	14.5	82.9	1.80
15 Happiness in marital relationships	0.9	1.8	97.4	1.96
<b>Family subjective well-being</b>	Min-Max= 20.00– 100.00 Mean= 88.04			

Note: D: Dissatisfied, L: Less, S: Satisfied, Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum

Table 9 shows that the analysis of the distribution of fisher families' well-being categories on the south coast showed that most families, 84.2%, were in the high well-being category. However, 3.5% of families are still in the low-well-being category.

**Table 9.** Distribution of Family Subjective Well-being Categories

Category	n	%	Min-Max	Mean±STD
Low	8	3.5	20.00 – 100.00	88.04 ± 12.16
Moderate	28	12.3		
High	192	84.2		

Note: Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, STD: Deviation Standard

### 3.6 The correlation between family characteristics, husband-wife interaction, and verbal communication on the subjective well-being of fishermen's families

Table 10 shows that statistical tests showed a significant positive relationship between age at marriage and the quality of husband-wife interaction, wife's years of education and the level of verbal abuse, and wife's years of education and subjective well-being. In addition, a significant positive relationship was also found between spousal interaction and subjective well-being, indicating that the quality of the relationship between spouses can contribute to the improvement of subjective well-being. On the other hand, the results also identified a significant negative relationship between spousal interaction and verbal abuse, indicating that the better the quality of interaction between spouses, the lower the level of verbal abuse in the relationship. In addition, there was a significant negative relationship between verbal violence and subjective well-being, indicating that the higher the level of verbal violence in the family, the lower the level of subjective well-being felt by family members. The statistical test results are presented in detail in Table 10.



**Table 10.** Correlation coefficient of characteristics and variables

Variable	Husband- Wife Interaction	Verbal violence	Verbal affection	Family subjective well-being
Age of Marriage (years)	<b>0.133*</b>	-0.028	0.017	0.092
Wife's Age (years)	0.085	-0.041	0.009	-0.086
Wife's Education (years)	-0.047	<b>0.182**</b>	-0.074	<b>0.146*</b>
Husband's Age (years)	0.013	-0.083	-0.005	-0.038
Husband's Education (years)	0.019	0.127	0.058	0.051
Family Income (IDR)	-0.007	-0.017	-0.025	0.050
Husband-Wife Interaction (index)	1	<b>-0.163*</b>	0.230**	<b>0.146*</b>
Verbal violence (index)		1	-0.088	<b>-0.203**</b>
Verbal affection (index)			1	0.050

\*Significant in  $p < 0,05$  (2-tailed); \*\*significant in  $p < 0,01$  (2-tailed), IDR: Indonesian Rupiah

## 4 Discussion

In the family, husband-wife interaction is a relationship between partners involving feelings and emotional control [8]. The results showed that the family interaction between husband and wife was classified in the moderate category. This reflects that most couples show a fairly good level of interaction, although not fully optimal, so it still requires improvement. Some areas that need attention include the quality of communication, emotional involvement, and joint decision-making. Good interaction between husband and wife has a crucial role in the smooth running of daily activities in the family [9]. This is because good interaction maintains the harmony of family functions [10]. Maintaining family harmony largely depends on effective communication between family members.

Communication is an effective way to bind family relationships closer together. However, not all individuals have good communication skills, including in families. The results showed that verbal affection in the family was still relatively low, much lower than the average distribution of verbal affection in families in general. The types of fishermen's work which require a lot of time and energy and an often-irregular lifestyle, can limit the quality of emotional interactions between family members. Affectionate verbal communication aims to create joy and build positive attitudes within the family. Building a positive climate in the family is very important so that family members feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves and developing self-resilience and family resilience. Therefore, emotional management is required to build positive verbal communication [11].

The results of the study on verbal violence in the family show that the majority are in the low category. Although the percentage is low, there are still individuals or families involved in unhealthy communication patterns, which have the potential to hurt the emotional and psychological well-being of family members. The results showed that the higher the wife's education, the higher the occurrence of verbal violence. This can occur because educated wives can voice opinions, needs, or dissatisfaction, which can be considered verbal violence from specific perspectives, whereas implementing good communication in the family has

implications for the emotional development process of children and other family members. Good parental communication will have a positive influence on children, which has an impact on good child development and vice versa [12].

Research also shows that subjective family well-being has a positive relationship with husband-wife interaction and a negative relationship with verbal violence. The significant positive relationship between spousal interaction and subjective well-being suggests that the relationship quality between spouses greatly influences their well-being. Research has also shown that dependence between husband and wife is an essential factor in subjective well-being, including psychological well-being and happiness [13]. In addition, good marital interaction is also a factor that determines family well-being [2].

On the other hand, the significant negative relationship between verbal violence and subjective well-being indicates that the higher the level of verbal violence in the relationship, the lower the subjective well-being felt by family members, especially wives. Extreme weather phenomena like in coastal areas can exacerbate women's vulnerability to various forms of violence [14]. Research shows that verbal violence, such as abusive words or being called animal names, can lead to a decrease in an individual's subjective well-being. Although verbal violence does not leave physical marks, its impact on women's mental health is severe. Verbal abuse can cause stress, depression, and various other psychological problems [15]. A limitation of this study is that the research was conducted during harvest time only, not reflecting the dynamics of fishermen's families over time, especially given the seasonal nature of fishermen's work. In addition, the study was only conducted on fisher families on the south coast of West Java, so the results cannot be generalized to other regions or communities with different cultural, social, and economic characteristics.

## **5 Conclusion and recommendation**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The average husband-wife interaction is quite good. Almost all wives feel safe (trust) when their husbands must make crucial decisions. Half the wives and husbands never call their partner by their favorite name. One in five wives and husbands never express love verbally to their partners. The most common verbal violence is criticizing partners. The average achievement of subjective family well-being is in the high category. Husband-wife interaction was significantly positively correlated with verbal affection and age of marriage and negatively correlated with verbal violence. In addition, the wife's education was significantly positively correlated with verbal violence. The wife's education and husband-wife interaction were significantly positively correlated with the family's subjective well-being, while verbal violence was significantly negatively correlated with the family's subjective well-being.

### **5.2 Recommendation**

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations that can be applied to improve family well-being are to focus on improving the quality of communication between husband and wife, both verbal and nonverbal, to create more harmonious and loving interactions. In addition, it is essential to manage emotions in the family to prevent verbal violence that can hurt psychological well-being, especially for women. The government can initiate a public campaign to stop verbal violence in families by involving the media and community leaders. Educational institutions and counselors can provide training for couples on the importance of positive verbal communication and strategies for resolving conflicts without violence.

Academicians can develop modules based on research results for formal and non-formal education on family communication and interaction.

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