

Psychological well-being in fisher families: Analyzed of affectionate verbal communication and husband-wife interaction

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Abstract. Psychological well-being is a critical determinant of family stability and harmony, particularly among fishing families who encounter substantial economic and environmental challenges. It facilitates adaptation to adverse circumstances, stress management, and the maintenance of harmonious family relationships. This study investigates the influence of affectionate communication and spousal interaction on the psychological well-being of fishing families. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was applied to a sample of 63 respondents from Sukabumi and Cirebon, building on previous research. Data were analyzed to assess relationships between affectionate verbal communication, spousal interaction quality, and psychological well-being. Affectionate verbal communication and spousal interaction were generally rated at a moderate level, whereas overall psychological well-being was rated high. A significant positive association was found between the number of family members, the quality of spousal interaction, and psychological well-being. Strengthening effective communication skills is essential for fishing families to cope with socio-economic and environmental pressures. Policy implications include the need for government-led mental health services and empowerment programs, such as financial literacy training and capital assistance.

1 Introduction

Climate change exacerbates the living conditions of coastal communities, affecting not only their economic livelihoods but also their social dynamics and psychological well-being. According on the findings reported in previous studies, it has been indicated that climate change has a significant impact on coastal areas, affecting small-scale fishermen with declining catches and unpredictable weather [1]. This pressure on fishermen's livelihoods affects their health, nutrition, and social well-being, which in turn impacts family interactions and communication. These challenges are compounded by the extreme poverty and low

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family interaction that characterize many coastal areas coastal areas are regions with high extreme poverty and low family interaction, where fishing communities experience vulnerability in well-being due to low formal education, poor health, and large family sizes [2]. This scenario underscores the importance of research into affectionate verbal communication and spousal interaction as critical factors supporting the psychological well-being of fishermen's families.

The research conducted by Defina *et al.* high lights the significant impacts of climate change on fishing families in the northern and southern coastal regions of West Java [1]. In the northern region, climate change is manifested in increased temperatures, droughts, and flooding, while the southern region faces irregular rainfall patterns, strong winds, and high waves. Despite similar perceptions of climate change between these regions, wives of fishermen in the southern coastal area report more severe impacts, including greater vulnerability to illness and a decline in family income. Additionally, the study by Rizkillah *et al* in 2024 found that spousal interaction in these families was classified as moderate, nearly all wives feel secure and trusting when their husbands are required to make important decisions [2].

In the context of psychological well-being, it plays a crucial role in maintaining family stability and harmony, particularly for fishermen families who face unique challenges. Psychological well-being refers to a state of happiness that reflects freedom from distress, characterized by a balance between positive and negative aspects [3]. Fishing families often experience economic pressures and work in environments prone to uncertainty, as the nature of fishing involves unpredictable income and high risks associated with changing weather conditions. Data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2022 shows that 12.5 percent of Indonesia's poor population resides in coastal areas, highlighting the difficult economic conditions faced by these families. These conditions not only affect physical well-being but also mental and psychological health, especially in the relationships between husbands and wives [3]. Uncertainty in income and dependence on weather for livelihood increase stress, which negatively impacts family dynamics and marital relationships, influencing the emotional and psychological state of family members [4].

Effective communication, particularly between spouses, plays a vital role in ensuring psychological well-being in these families. Positive communication helps create harmony and strengthens marital relationships, contributing to better psychological outcomes [5]. In contrast, poor communication or negative interactions can deteriorate family well-being [6].

However, many fishing families, particularly those in coastal areas, lack access to mental health services, which makes it difficult for them to manage the psychological challenges they face. Research by Rizkillah shows further emphasizes that a wife's education and positive spousal interaction are positively correlated with subjective well-being, while negative communication patterns, including verbal violence, can harm family well-being in fishing families [2].

However, research focusing on fishing families still needs to be completed, especially in the Indonesian context. Given the unique challenges faced by fishing families in Indonesia, it is imperative to examine how affectionate verbal communication and husband-wife interaction can influence their psychological well-being. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the influence of affectionate communication and husband-wife interaction on the psychological well-being of fisher families, as well as provide insights that can be used as the basis for interventions to improve resilience and overall family well-being.

2 Research methods

2.1 Design, location, and sample of the research

This study employs a quantitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative method enables the generation of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed, thereby offering meaningful insights into the relationships among the variables studied. Using a cross-sectional design, the research was conducted at a single point in time across two coastal regions of West Java: Sukabumi Regency, representing the southern coast, and Cirebon Regency, representing the northern coast.

The study population comprised fishing families living in these coastal areas, with the selected respondents being fishermen's wives residing in Palabuhan Ratu District, Sukabumi, and GebangMekar District, Cirebon. Respondents were chosen using a purposive sampling technique, resulting in a total sample of 63 participants. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires.

2.2 Variable and data collection

Data were obtained via interviews using a structured questionnaire covering three main variables: husband–wife interaction, verbal communication of affection, and psychological well-being. All instruments had been previously tested for validity and reliability.

1. *Husband–wife interaction* was measured using 20 items, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.524.
2. *Verbal communication of affection* was measured using 10 items, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.678.
3. *Psychological well-being* was measured based on Sunarti (2019) using 10 items, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.903.

For the husband–wife interaction and verbal communication of affection variables, responses were recorded on a Likert scale: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = always. Psychological well-being was assessed using a semantic differential scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied).

2.3 Data analysis

Primary data were collected using the structured questionnaire, which was subsequently processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Data management involved several stages: coding, scoring, statistical analysis, and interpretation of results. Descriptive analysis was used to identify the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of fishing families. In addition, regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of independent variables—family characteristics, husband–wife interaction, verbal communication of affection, and verbal communication of violence—on psychological well-being.

3 Results

3.1 Fisherman’s family characteristic

The statistical test results indicate that the p-values for all family characteristics are greater than 0.05, suggesting no significant differences between the northern (GebangMekar) and southern (Palabuhan Ratu) regions in terms of husband’s and wife’s age, age at marriage, number of family members, number of sons and daughters, age of the youngest child, and household expenditure. These findings suggest that the demographic and economic characteristics of fishing families in the two regions are relatively similar.

The results further show that approximately 50% of wives in both areas do not work outside the home, implying that the primary economic responsibility rests with the husband. In addition, most of both husbands and wives have an education level equivalent to primary school. Regarding housing conditions, most respondents own their homes; however, in terms of fishing assets, more than half of the fishermen reported that the boats they use are not privately owned but belong to others

3.2 Verbal communication of affection

The results indicate that most respondents (44 individuals, 69.8%) fell within the medium category for verbal expressions of affection. This suggests that most couples demonstrate a moderate level of verbal emotional warmth—generally positive but not yet optimal in fostering deeper emotional connection. Twelve respondents (19%) were classified in the high category, reflecting consistent and strong verbal expressions of affection toward their partners. In contrast, seven respondents (11.1%) were placed in the low category, indicating limited verbal expressions of affection within their marital relationships. These findings highlight the importance of directing greater attention toward couples in the low category to improve emotional communication.

Table 1. Crosstab of verbal affection index categories by age at marriage, wife's occupation, and family size

Characteristics	Category	Index Category					
		Low		Medium		High	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Age at Marriage	Below Age According to BKKBN	4	6.35	34	53.97	7	11.11
	Above Age According to BKKBN	3	4.76	10	15.87	5	7.94
Wife's Occupation	Not Working	6	9.52	19	30.16	10	15.87
	Working	1	1.59	25	38.68	2	3.17
Family Size	Small Family	2	3.17	22	34.92	2	3.17
	Medium Family	3	4.76	17	26.98	5	7.94
	Large Family	2	3.17	5	7.94	0	0.00
Total		7	11.2	44	69.8	12	19

Analysis of response patterns further shows that approximately 61.9% of husbands regularly expressed affection toward their wives, while 52.4% provided verbal comfort. Additionally, 57.1% of respondents reported giving praise to their husbands. However, a portion of respondents stated that their husbands never offered verbal praise or comfort, and some reported never receiving verbal expressions of affection at all. These findings suggest that, although verbal expressions of affection occur with some regularity, their effectiveness in strengthening emotional bonds between family members remains suboptimal. Enhancing

the quality of verbal communication within families is therefore essential to fostering more harmonious and emotionally connected relationships between spouses and among other family members.

The analysis of verbal affection by age at marriage shows that most respondents—whether married below or above the ideal age recommended by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN)—fell into the medium verbal affection category. Of the 63 respondents, 44 individuals (69.84%) were in the moderate category, comprising 34 who married below the BKKBN-recommended age and 10 who married above it. These results suggest that age at marriage, whether earlier or later than the BKKBN guideline, does not have a dominant effect on the frequency or intensity of verbal affection within marital relationships.

Regarding wives' occupations, both working and non-working wives were predominantly in the medium verbal affection category. Among the 44 respondents (69.84%) in this category, 19 were non-working wives and 25 were working wives. Notably, non-working wives were more likely to fall into the high verbal affection category (10 individuals) compared to working wives (2 individuals). Conversely, low verbal affection was more common among non-working wives (6 individuals) than among working wives (1 individual). These findings indicate that a wife's employment status does not have a straightforward, linear relationship with verbal affection levels; however, there is a tendency for non-working wives to express higher levels of verbal affection.

In terms of family size, couples from both small and medium-sized families were most often in the medium verbal affection category, with 22 and 17 respondents, respectively. High verbal affection was predominantly found in small families (9 respondents), whereas no respondents from large families fell into the high category. This suggests that verbal expressions of affection are more consistently maintained and expressed in smaller families, whereas in larger families, such expressions may diminish, possibly due to increased caregiving demands or the greater complexity of family dynamics.

3.3 Husband-Wife interaction

Most respondents were in the medium category for husband–wife interaction, with 46 individuals (73%). This indicates that most couples demonstrate a moderate level of interaction quality, reflecting generally positive engagement, though with potential for enhancement. Fourteen respondents (22.2%) were in the high category, indicating strong and consistent interaction patterns within their marital relationships, while three respondents (4.8%) fell into the low category, suggesting limited interaction quality. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to strengthen communication and relational engagement among couples with low interaction levels.

In terms of specific behaviours, more than half of respondents (61.95%) reported making efforts to spend time with their husbands, and 52.4% expressed enjoyment in assisting their husbands with work or solving problems together. However, challenges remain: 25.4% of respondents admitted to raising their voices at their husbands, and 22.2% reported avoiding interaction altogether at times. These results reveal imbalances in interaction quality that warrant attention. Overall, the study highlights significant opportunities to improve both the quality and quantity of verbal and non-verbal interactions between spouses, with the aim of fostering stronger relationships, creating a more harmonious marital atmosphere, and deepening emotional bonds.

Table 2. Crosstab of husband-wife interaction index categories by age at marriage, wife's occupation, and family size

Characteristics	Category	Index Category					
		Low		Medium		High	
		n	%	n	%	N	%
Age at Marriage	Below Age According to BKKBN	3	4.67	31	49.21	11	17.46
	Above Age According to BKKBN	0	0	15	23.81	3	4.76
Wife's Occupation	Not Working	1	1.59	25	39.68	9	14.29
	Working	2	3.17	21	33.33	5	7.94
Family Size	Small Family	2	3.17	21	33.33	10	15.87
	Medium Family	1	1.59	19	30.16	3	4.76
	Large Family	0	0	6	9.52	1	1.59
Total		3	4.76	46	73.02	14	22.22

The results of the statistical tests indicate that, for both couples married below and above the ideal age recommended by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), the majority exhibited a moderate level of husband–wife interaction. Only a small number of respondents were in the low (3 individuals) and high (14 individuals) interaction categories. This suggests that age at marriage—whether earlier or later than the BKKBN guideline—does not substantially influence the likelihood of maintaining a moderate level of spousal interaction.

Similarly, the statistical analysis shows that both working and non-working wives were predominantly in the moderate interaction category. Of the 63 respondents, 46 (73.02%) reported moderate interaction, comprising 25 non-working wives and 21 working wives. Far fewer respondents fell into the low or high interaction categories. These findings indicate that a wife’s employment status is not a primary determinant of husband–wife interaction quality, as moderate interaction levels were prevalent among both working and non-working wives.

Crosstabulation results further reveal that most couples from both small and medium-sized families reported moderate levels of interaction. This suggests that family size may influence patterns of spousal interaction, with small and medium-sized families more likely to sustain moderate interaction levels compared to large families.

3.4 Psychological well-being

The results indicate that most respondents fell into the high category of psychological well-being, totaling 41 individuals (65.1%). This suggests that most respondents experience a strong sense of well-being, characterized by positive psychological functioning and life satisfaction. A further 16 respondents (25.4%) were classified in the medium category, indicating a moderate level of psychological well-being, with certain aspects of mental and emotional health potentially requiring enhancement. Meanwhile, 6 respondents (9.5%) were in the low category, reflecting comparatively lower levels of psychological well-being. These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions aimed at improving mental health and overall life satisfaction among individuals in this group.

Overall, the results show that more than half of the respondents report a high level of psychological well-being, reflecting generally favourable emotional, mental, and psychological conditions. This suggests that many family members feel safe, stable, and happy in their daily lives, and are able to cope with psychological challenges with adequate resilience. The distribution of responses reveals that over half (52.4%) perceive themselves as having high well-being in terms of family harmony and fulfilment of spousal roles and responsibilities. However, despite the generally high overall level of well-being, certain

aspects—such as the role of individuals within the community and the comfort and environmental quality of the home—still indicate lower levels of well-being and warrant further attention.

Table 3. Crosstab of psychological well-being index categories by age at marriage, wife's occupation, and family size

Characteristic	Category	Index Category					
		Low		Medium		High	
		n	%	N	%	n	%
Age at Marriage	Below Age According to BKKBN	5	7.94	13	20.63	27	42.86
	Above Age According to BKKBN	1	1.59	3	4.76	16	24.40
Wife's Occupation	Not Working	5	7.94	11	17.46	19	30.16
	Working	1	1.59	5	7.94	22	24.92
Family Size	Small Family	3	4.76	11	17.46	19	30.16
	Medium Family	3	4.76	5	7.94	15	23.81
	Large Family	0	0	0	0	7	11.11
Home Ownership	Owned by Others	1	1.59	2	3.17	8	12.70
	Owned by Others	5	7.94	13	20.63	33	52.38
Boat Ownership	Owned by Others	3	4.76	8	12.70	24	38.10
	Privately Owned	3	4.76	8	12.70	7	11.11
Total		6	9.52	16	25.40	41	65.08

The statistical test results indicate that most respondents who married below the ideal age set by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) were in the high (n = 27) and medium (n = 13) psychological well-being categories. Those who married above the ideal age also contributed to the high well-being group (n = 14), albeit in smaller numbers. Overall, early marriage appears to be more prevalent in the sample; however, both age groups are represented within the high psychological well-being category, suggesting that age at marriage, whether below or above the BKKBN recommendation, is not a decisive determinant of psychological well-being.

The statistical analysis further reveals that within the high psychological well-being category, the distribution between respondents with working wives (n = 22) and non-working wives (n = 19) is relatively balanced. This indicates that the wife’s employment status is not strongly correlated with the husband’s psychological well-being, although there is a slightly higher proportion of working wives in the high well-being group.

In terms of family size, high psychological well-being is more frequently observed among respondents from small (n = 19) and medium-sized families (n = 15), and less common among those from large families (n = 7). This pattern suggests that a smaller number of family members tends to be associated with higher psychological well-being, possibly due to reduced economic and caregiving burdens.

Regarding home ownership, 51 respondents reported owning their homes, the majority of whom were in the high (n = 33) and medium (n = 13) psychological well-being categories, with only a small number in the low category (n = 5). In contrast, respondents living in houses owned by others were more likely to be in the low or medium categories, indicating that home ownership may contribute positively to psychological well-being.

However, a different trend emerges in relation to boat ownership. The majority of respondents in the high psychological well-being category used boats owned by others (n = 24), whereas only a small proportion in this category owned their own boats (n = 7). This finding suggests that ownership of productive assets, such as boats, does not necessarily correspond to higher psychological well-being in this context, and that other factors—such

as access to resources, maintenance costs, or shared operational arrangements—may play a more critical role.

3.5 The effect of verbal affection, verbal violence, and husband-wife interaction on psychological well-being

The statistical test results indicate that husband–wife interaction and the number of family members have a significant positive influence on psychological well-being. In this study, the Adjusted R Square value was 0.161, suggesting that the examined variables explain 16.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. This underscores the role of interpersonal relationships and family dynamics in shaping individual psychological outcomes. The detailed results of the influence tests are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test of the effect of verbal affection, verbal violence, and husband-wife interaction on psychological well-being

Variable	Family Wellbeing		Sig
	The sig coefficient is not standardized β	Standardized coefficient β	
Married Age	-0.007	-0.002	0.987
Number of Family Members	2,566	0.346	0.019*
Husband's Age	-0.965	-0.547	0.192
Wife's Age	0.964	0.463	0.659
Husband and Wife Interaction	0.734	0.380	0.003**
Verbal Communication of Affection	0.235	0.186	0.187
Adjusted R Squared = 0.161 F = 2,705 Sig = 0.017			

4 Discussion

The findings reveal that most couples whether married below or above the ideal age recommended by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) demonstrate moderate levels of husband–wife interaction. This suggests that age at marriage is not a direct determinant of psychological well-being. In terms of the wife’s employment status, both working and non-working wives were predominantly in the moderate interaction category, indicating no significant effect on the quality of marital interaction. However, Studies note that working wives may face challenges in balancing work responsibilities and family obligations.

With respect to family size, small and medium-sized families tended to have moderate levels of husband–wife interaction, whereas larger families more frequently exhibited low interaction levels. This aligns with previous findings, which reported a significant negative association between family size and well-being. A greater number of family members often reduced family well-being [7]. Conversely, in parent-child relationships, developmental factors are more influential. This finding confirms that family communication dynamics are more influenced by the development of family members than by marital age alone.

Family size also influences affectionate communication, with small and medium families more often in the moderate and high categories, while large families were concentrated in the

moderate and low categories. Previous research also highlighted that larger families face greater challenges in sustaining effective spousal relationship and intimacy [8].

In the socio-economic context, fishing households remain far from prosperous, common constraints include limited assets, weak capital structures, low bargaining power in accessing justice and economic resources, and restricted market and technological access [9]. One crucial factor for improving their welfare is access to adequate fishing equipment. The use of advanced technology could therefore enhance productivity and improve household earnings.

The present study confirms that husband–wife interaction significantly influences psychological well-being, a finding consistent with previous research that emphasized the importance of marital relationship quality for physical and mental well-being [6]. However, in the families studied, spousal interaction was often suboptimal due to ineffective communication, including tendencies for one partner to avoid discussion. Effective marital communication fosters mutual understanding, respect, trust, and affection, all of which are essential for family harmony [10, 11]

In-depth interviews revealed that some couples rarely expressed affection due to ongoing conflicts and tensions. Communication dominated by verbal or physical aggression increases the risk of unhealthy interactions, fostering prejudice, misunderstanding, and mistrust [12]. Thus, cultivating affectionate communication is critical for strengthening family relationships and promoting psychological well-being. Previous studies also found that positive verbal interactions such as speaking gently and offering compliments are positively associated with the subjective well-being of fishing families in West Java’s southern coastal areas, even amid economic and environmental pressure [2].

This study is limited by its relatively small sample size, as it forms part of a broader research project. Consequently, the findings should be considered exploratory and not generalizable. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples are needed to validate these results and provide deeper insights into spousal interaction dynamics.

5 Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the research results, in the families studied, most of the economic role depends on the husband, considering that around 50% of wives do not work outside the home. In addition, most married couples have educational levels that are still limited to basic education (primary school or equivalent), which may affect their opportunities and quality of life. The family's socioeconomic conditions show that although most respondents have their own homes, more than half of the fishermen use boats that are not privately owned but belong to other people, which reflects limitations in the ownership of important assets. In terms of communication within the family, even though there are efforts to express affection verbally, the quality and intensity of verbal communication are still moderate, which means it is not fully effective in strengthening emotional ties between family members. This is also reflected in the interaction between husband and wife, which is still at a moderate level, with an imbalance in the quality of interaction, such as increasing the use of high voices or avoiding meetings. Despite this, most respondents reported high levels of psychological well-being, reflecting good emotional and psychological stability and the ability to face challenges in everyday life. However, several welfare aspects are still low, such as comfort in social roles and the family environment. Statistical tests show that the interaction between husband and wife and the

number of family members significantly positively influence psychological well-being. However, they only explain 16.1% of the variation in well-being. Overall, the results of this study emphasize the importance of improving the quality of communication, interaction, and social well-being in the family to strengthen relationships between family members and improve their psychological well-being.

5.2 Recommendation

To improve the welfare of fishing families, it is important for each family to strengthen affectionate communication and build harmonious interactions between husband and wife. Fishing families need to improve effective communication skills to better cope with economic and environmental pressures. In addition, fisher wives can be provided with creative economic skills training to help supplement family income. The government also plays a role in providing access to mental health services and family empowerment programs, such as financial literacy training and business capital assistance, to improve the psychological and economic well-being of fisher families. Stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations and companies engaged in the marine sector, can contribute by providing mentoring and training for fishermen and encouraging partnership programs that can increase their catch and economic.

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