

Long Distance Relationship: Is It Satisfactory?

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Abstract / Abstrak

Long-distance relationships (LDRs) are often viewed as challenging in maintaining the quality of romantic relationships, especially among early adult women who are in the phase of seeking emotional stability and long-term commitment. This study aims to explore relationship satisfaction among early adult women engaged in long-distance relationships. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach with purposive sampling, involving four women aged 25–30 years who had been in LDRs for more than one year. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and nonverbal observations, then analyzed using data reduction and thematic coding techniques. The results show that although participants faced limited face-to-face interaction and risks of miscommunication, relationship satisfaction was maintained through effective communication, trust, and commitment. Supporting factors included problem-solving ability, partner attentiveness, and emotional understanding. Communication technology played an important role in maintaining emotional closeness. Participants viewed LDRs as a stage toward more serious, marriage-oriented relationships.

Hubungan jarak jauh (LDR) sering dipandang menantang dalam menjaga kualitas hubungan romantis, terutama bagi wanita dewasa awal yang berada pada fase pencarian kestabilan emosional dan komitmen jangka panjang. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi kepuasan hubungan pada wanita dewasa awal yang menjalani long distance relationship. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif fenomenologi dengan teknik purposive sampling, melibatkan empat wanita berusia 25–30 tahun yang telah menjalani LDR lebih dari satu tahun. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi nonverbal, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan reduksi data dan koding tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun partisipan menghadapi keterbatasan interaksi langsung dan risiko miskomunikasi, kepuasan hubungan tetap terjaga melalui komunikasi efektif, kepercayaan, dan komitmen. Faktor pendukung meliputi kemampuan menyelesaikan masalah, perhatian pasangan, dan pemahaman emosional. Teknologi komunikasi berperan penting dalam menjaga kedekatan emosional. Partisipan memandang LDR sebagai tahap menuju hubungan lebih serius dan berorientasi pada pernikahan.

Keywords / Kata kunci

Long distance relationship (LDR); Relationship satisfaction; Adult Woman

Hubungan Jarak Jauh (LDR); Kepuasan Hubungan; Wanita Dewasa

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Introduction

A long-distance relationship (LDR) refers to a romantic relationship in which partners are geographically separated across cities, islands, or even countries. The distance between partners may arise from various factors such as educational demands, employment, economic conditions, or other personal reasons (Chrisnatalia & Ramadhan, 2022). LDRs have become an increasingly common global phenomenon in the digital era. The advancement of communication technology allows couples to stay connected despite physical separation (Dainton & Aylor, 2002). However, LDRs continue to pose distinctive challenges,

including limited physical closeness, differences in time zones, and difficulties in establishing emotional intimacy with one's partner (Stafford, 2005; Borelli et al., 2015).

Previous studies have shown that couples in long-distance relationships often develop more effective communication strategies and display higher levels of trust than geographically close couples (Jiang & Hancock, 2013). Furthermore, the success of an LDR depends on crucial factors such as strong commitment, flexibility, and effective conflict management (Dargie et al., 2015). These findings indicate that an LDR is not merely about overcoming physical distance but

also about constructing a solid emotional foundation between partners.

The phenomenon of long-distance relationships is also prevalent in Indonesia. An online survey conducted by Jakpad with 1,048 respondents found that 55.8% believed that LDRs are unlikely to succeed, while 44.25% maintained that such relationships still have the potential to last. Additionally, the data revealed that 56.6% of LDR couples successfully continued their relationships into marriage, whereas 43.4% ended their relationships (Jakmin, 2023). These findings raise important questions regarding the factors contributing to relationship success and satisfaction in LDRs, particularly among young adult women in Indonesia.

Previous research has demonstrated that individuals in LDRs tend to report high levels of trust, and despite limited physical intimacy, passion and love can often compensate for the distance (Joshi, 2021). Other studies have shown that couples who maintain effective communication and mutual trust experience relationship satisfaction comparable to couples who live close to each other (Waterman et al., 2017). A study involving 204 respondents engaged in long-distance relationships using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) revealed that most participants reported low to moderate levels of relationship satisfaction, with only a small proportion expressing high satisfaction in their relationships (Hartono, 2025). Similarly, a longitudinal study by Du Bois et al. (2022) found that LDR couples face complex challenges in maintaining long-term relationship satisfaction, particularly concerning conflict management, communication, and emotional support.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the dynamics of long-distance relationships, most focus on couples in general without considering developmental age variations. Furthermore, many rely on quantitative approaches that measure satisfaction numerically, and few have specifically explored the Indonesian cultural context, which upholds strong social norms regarding marriage. This indicates a research gap in understanding how individuals particularly young adult women subjectively interpret satisfaction in a long-distance relationship.

Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on the experiences of young adult women in Indonesia who are engaged in LDRs, employing a qualitative phenomenological approach. Early adulthood, spanning ages 18–40 (Hurlock, 2003;

Afandi, 2023), is a crucial developmental stage characterized by transitions toward independence, identity exploration, and readiness to form serious intimate relationships (Paputungan, 2023). During this stage, individuals are expected to make decisions regarding life partners and to establish stable, enduring relationships (Havighurst, 1961; Zulfiqri, 2022). Therefore, this study seeks to explore the subjective experiences of young adult women in long-distance relationships, identify the factors influencing relationship satisfaction, and understand the adaptive strategies they employ to maintain relational quality.

By emphasizing the Indonesian cultural context, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the literature by providing a new perspective on how distance is not merely perceived as an obstacle but can also serve as an opportunity to strengthen relational bonds. Practically, this study may serve as a reference for developing relationship counseling and psychological interventions tailored to the needs of young couples engaged in long-distance relationships in Indonesia.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. This approach was selected because it focuses on exploring participants' subjective experiences in depth, particularly regarding relationship satisfaction in the context of long-distance relationships (Moustakas, 1994; Ramadhani, 2022). The study involved four female participants in early adulthood who met the following criteria: aged 25 years or older, currently engaged in a romantic long-distance relationship (LDR) lasting at least one year, and voluntarily willing to participate in interviews. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that identifies individuals based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility while maintaining focus on the research theme. Each participant was interviewed once or twice, with each session lasting approximately 60–90 minutes. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online via video call, depending on the participants' availability and convenience, to accommodate geographic limitations. An interview guide was developed by the researcher to ensure that the questions remained aligned with

the study's focus. In addition to verbal responses, nonverbal observations of participants were also recorded as supplementary data. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the data verbatim and conducted member checking to verify the accuracy of participants' accounts.

The research process followed a systematic procedure beginning with participant screening based on the inclusion criteria, followed by the interview sessions, transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. Data analysis involved several stages: data reduction to select relevant information, data coding into specific categories, and the organization of these categories into themes representing participants' lived experiences. The coding process aimed to identify recurring patterns related to participants' perceptions of relationship satisfaction within LDR dynamics. Through this procedure, the researcher sought to uncover the deeper meaning of participants' experiences while maintaining data credibility through triangulation and member checking.

Results

Based on the results of a study conducted on four respondents currently in long-distance relationships (LDR), the study examined the experiences of four respondents: women in early adulthood, aged 25-30, who are currently in long-distance relationships (LDR). The following table shows the data from the research respondents.

Table 1
Research Participants

Initial	Age	Gender	Duration of Relationship
RD	30 Year	Female	2 Year
NM	27 Year	Female	1.5 Year
KK	26 Year	Female	2 Year
DT	25 Year	Female	3 Year

Of the four participants, all of them were in long-distance relationships and participants got to know their partners in various ways, for example, subject RD got to know his partner because he was known and with RD's friends, this is the same as what was experienced by KK and DT who each got to know their partners because they were introduced by their respective friends. However, for respondent NM, regarding his partner through online introductions through one of the social media applications that NM usually uses to broadcast live. Then for the decisions taken by the four participants when deciding to date their

current partners, most of them were because each participant found compatibility and comfort in terms of communication and in readiness to undergo a serious relationship. This was explained by RD during the interview:

Setelah kami berkenalan saat bertemu diacara itu, kami tetap berkomunikasi walaupun tidak terlalu intens. Dan dari percakapan yang kami lakukan ternyata saya merasa orangnya itu menarik, dari segi pembicaraan dan pemikiran. Kemudian saat melakukan diskusi saya merasa cocok, nyaman serta nyambung dan begitupun sebaliknya. Dan setelah beberapa bulan berteman dan menjalin komunikasi akhirnya kami memutuskan untuk menjalin hubungan pacaran.

After we got acquainted when we met at the event, we continued to communicate although not too intensely. And from the conversations we had, it turned out that I felt that the person was interesting, in terms of conversation and thinking. Then when having a discussion I felt compatible, comfortable and connected and vice versa. And after several months of being friends and communicating, we finally decided to have a relationship.

This is in line with the answer given by DT

Awalnya dikenal sama teman dan setelahnya itu sering komunikasi melalui wa dan Instagram dan kelamaan jadi intens dan kami berdua merasa cocok dan nyambung juga kalo komunikasi, jadi ya kami akhirnya memutuskan untuk berpacaran.

Initially we met through a friend and after that we often communicated via WhatsApp and Instagram and over time it became intense and we both felt that we were compatible and connected when communicating, so we finally decided to date.

Based on results interview can analyzed that method introduction between participants with each pair varies greatly, however part big introduced through Friend from subject , while One subject meet with his partner through social media applications. Although method introduction different, but decision For undergo connection in a relationship based on the same factors that is existence fit and comfort in communicate. This is seen with clear from RD and DT statements that emphasize importance Intense communication ,aligned thinking, and the presence of comfortable

feeling moment interact with couples . Decisions and processes for towards connection the dating that was done was also not happen in a way instant, but through a long process and stages. Starting from introduction, approach with do ongoing communication during a number of time so that allow second split party For Can know more deep and can build strong foundation and belief before they decide For to weave more relationship Serious again. Findings This show that quality in communicate and interact become factor main for subject For decide build connection romantic.

In undergoing a long-distance relationship, each couple will be faced with various challenges and problems that will arise. Such as the challenges faced by the subjects in this study who explained the challenges in terms of limitations to meet in person due to the long distance with each partner, miscommunication with partners, how to maintain trust with partners, and overcome boredom felt when undergoing a long-distance relationship. This was explained by participants RD, KK and DT in their interviews:

Menurut saya tantangannya itu kepercayaan, dan cara saya mengatasinya dengan berusaha berpikir positif dan menyibukkan diri sehingga pikiran saya tidak hanya terpaku untuk memikirkan hal-hal yang akan mempengaruhi hubungan kami (seperti OVT).

Yang menjadi tantangan terbesar ya rasa bosan itu sendiri, karena kita tidak ada ketemu yang sering gitu dan cuman telfonan dan topiknya juga itu-itu aja jadi bosan. Dan dari waktu juga biasanya kami telfonan itu malam atau sore sampe malam gitu dan pembahasannya gitu-gitu aja. Jadi tantangannya bosan. Dan untuk mengatasinya itu kita sering ngasih hadiah kecil misalnya seperti ada yang ulang tahun nanti dikasih hadiah atau ketika ada pencapaian apa dihubungan kami biasanya saling kasih hadiah atau kirim hadiah, jadi berasa kalo kita itu punya pacar.

Tantangan itu karena jarang ketemu dan ketika ingin bertemu memerlukan effort yang besar.

I think the challenge is trust, and the way I overcome it is by trying to think positively and keep myself busy so that my mind is not only focused on thinking about things that will affect our relationship (like OVT).

"The biggest challenge is boredom itself, because we don't meet often and only talk on

the phone and the topics are the same, so it gets boring. And from the time, we usually talk on the phone at night or in the afternoon until evening and the discussion is always the same. So the challenge is boredom. And to overcome that, we often give small gifts, for example, if someone has a birthday, they will give a gift or when there is an achievement in our relationship, we usually give each other gifts or send gifts, so it feels like we have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

The challenge is because we rarely meet and when we want to meet, it requires a lot of effort.

However, unlike the answers of the three subjects above, subject NM has its own challenges where NM has never met her partner at all. This is because the subject and her partner met through social media and have never met the subject even once.

Tantangan terbesar mungkin LDR itu sendiri yak arena sayakan belum pernah ketemu sama dia, jadi cuman lewat WA aja jadi belum pernah ketemu sama dia. Itu aja sih.

The biggest challenge is probably LDR itself, because I've never met him, so it's just that via WA so I've never met him. That's all.

From the results interview show that each couple face diverse significant challenges. Challenges main identified by the subject that is guard trust, how overcome boredom consequence monotonous communication , the existence of limitations For Can meet in a way direct, and efforts extras needed done For Can meet with partner. As RD emphasized how importance guard beliefs and ways overcome it with think positive and busy self with things positive. KK also revealed that challenge the biggest in the relationship namely boredom Because Topic the conversation that took place not enough varies, but method overcome boredom That with each other give present For maintain feeling to couple. DT more highlight difficulty when want to meet in a way directly in need big effort because of their respective busyness. While that, NM faced a unique challenge compared to with third subject others. Challenges This because NM has not Once meet in a way direct with his partner, and make LDR is challenge the biggest in relationship. Difference natural challenges subject show complexity from a long distance relationship, which makes every partner own method alone For Can overcome challenge and requires they For develop strategies for overcome the obstacles they

face face it with still to maintain proximity in a way emotional and trust in connection they.

Although each subject has challenges and problems that they must face with each partner, the subjects have their own strategies in solving each problem and challenge they experience in their respective relationships. Such as communicating routinely with various media, openness with each partner, staying positive with their partner, and giving small surprises to maintain and make their partner feel that their partner has a partner even though they are separated by distance. This was explained by subjects RD, NM, KK and DT in their interviews:

Saya biasanya butuh waktu sebentar untuk berfikir, tapi biasanya kami pasti membicarakan dan mendiskusikan masalah tersebut. Dan salah satu harus ada yang menurunkan egonya dan harus ada yg minta maaf... Cara kami menyikapi permasalahan ya itu harus dihadapi saja karena kalau menghindar pasti masalahnya semakin rumit.

Kalo saya sendiri biasanya langsung saya selesaikan dan obrolnya dengan dia.... Karena menurut saya pribadi saya tidak suka Ketika ada masalah dan tidak selesai akhirnya berlarut-larut hingga hari esoknya. Karena belajar dari pengalaman ketika ada masalah itu harus diselesaikan dan tidak boleh kabur, ngambek, terus matiin telfon... Jadi harus dibicarakan, terus terang, karena laki-laki juga kurang peka ya... jadi kalo ada masalah langsung bilang, misalnya saya tidak suka dan itu tidak boleh dilakukan... Dan solusinya minta maaf dan dua-duanya harus minta maaf dan tidak boleh hanya salah satu saja... Jadi intinya dibicarakan dengan baik-baik dan sampe selesai. Tapi biasanya aku kalo masih gambek itu biasanya dikirmin sesuatu seperti makanan atau barang...

I usually need a moment to think, but usually we definitely talk about it and discuss the problem. And one of them has to lower their ego and someone has to apologize. .. Our way of dealing with problems is that we have to face them because if we avoid them, the problems will only get more complicated. For me, I usually finish it straight away and talk about it with him ... Because in my personal opinion, I don't like it when there is a problem and it's not resolved, it ends up dragging on until the next day.

Because learning from experience, when there is a problem, it must be resolved and you must not run away, sulk, and then turn off the phone ... So it must be discussed, openly , because ... men are also lacking sensitive yes ... so if there is a problem, say it straight away, for example I don't like it and it shouldn't be done ... And the solution is to apologize and both of them have to apologize and it can't be just one. just ... So the point is to talk it over nicely and until it's finished. But usually when I'm still upset, I usually get sent something like food or something g...

Interview results show that subject have different strategies in overcome problem in connection them . One of the strategies that stands out from fourth subject that is importance communication open and completion problem in a way direct when face a problem . RD emphasized importance For to discuss problems , lowering ego as well willing For request Sorry with couple . While KK emphasized importance openness , honesty in express feeling as well as own availability second split party For request Sorry couples. KK also provides the usual strategies done when face problem like give present small as form attention and request sorry. The strategy that is carried out show How maturity good emotional and commitment from subject For maintain connection they. Subject understand that with avoid conflict so will make problem become more complicated . So they choose For face problem in a way proactive. With the strategies carried out by the subject No only finish problems that occur, but can also strengthen bond in a way emotional and creates a feeling of mutual understanding in undergo connection distance.

In addition, implementing open and routine communication is a key aspect in maintaining a long-distance relationship. By using social media to communicate, trying to always be open and honest with each partner, so that couples find it easier to express their feelings to their partners. In addition to communication, trust and commitment are also seen as the main foundation and basis in undergoing a long-distance relationship, this is manifested in the consistency of words and actions given by each partner and which is the focus and common goal of each subject and their partner. This was explained by each subject in their interview:

Saya pribadi berusaha untuk mengalir saja dengan komitmen ini... Dan menurut saya kepercayaan dan komitmen itu sangat

penting yah karena itu menjadi kunci utama bagi kami menjalani hubungan.

Kepercayaan dan komitmen dalam hubungan itu sangatlah penting karena menjadi kunci bagi kita menjalani hubungan itu... Jadi menurut saya komitmen itu jadi pengingat sih Ketika kami ada masalah seperti itu.

Kalau komitmen dalam suatu hubungan itu pasti menjaga atau suatu kepercayaan kita masing-masing ya pokoknya intinya saling percaya untuk meraih satu gol kita... dan tentunya juga yang menjadi hal penting yaitu Komunikasi... kepercayaan dalam sebuah hubungan dan percaya sama pasangan sangat penting. Intinya itu saling percaya sih karena kita LDR ya harus percaya itu benar sih satu kunci LDR adalah kepercayaan...Betul ketika menjalani hubungan saya selalu terbuka dengan pasangan Saya... intinya adalah keterbukaan dan komunikasi, saya sama Pasangan saya juga harus terbuka sekecil apapun masalahnya... saya menganggap dia adalah sahabat, partner dan teman sejati saya.

Kepercayaan itu adalah apa yang kita ucapkan, kita berpikir, dan lakukan bersama...Sedangkan kalau komitmen itu mau membuat pilihan dan menanggung risikonya...Misalkan saat saya memberi pilihan kedia untuk berhenti merokok jika mau pacaran dengan saya, dan dia memilih untuk berhenti merokok.

I personally try to just go with the flow of this commitment ... And I think trust and commitment are very important because they are the main keys for us in our relationship. Trust and commitment in a relationship are very important because they are the key for us to live the relationship ... So I think commitment is a reminder when we have problems like that.

If commitment in a relationship is definitely maintaining or a trust of each of us , the point is trusting each other to achieve our one goal ... and of course the important thing is communication. .. trust in a relationship and trust in your partner is very important. The point is trusting each other because we are in a long-distance relationship, we have to trust, that's right, one key to a long-distance relationship is trust ... That's right, when I'm in a relationship, I'm always open with my partner ... the point is openness and communication , I and my partner must also be open, no matter how small the problem is

... I consider him a true friend , partner and companion I.

Trust is is what we say, what we think, and what we do together ... While if the commitment is willing to make choices and postpone the risks ... For example moment I give choice second For stop smoke If Want to in a relationship with I, and he chose to stop smoking.

Interview results show that communication openness, trust and commitment become strong foundation in maintain connection distance long distance (LDR). Subject emphasize importance regular communication via social media and openness in express feelings. They look at trust as key main, a subject state that lack of trust can become threat for sustainability relationship . Commitment is also understood as availability For face challenge together as well as own same purpose . Some the subject also describes partner they No only as lover, but consider his partner as friends and partners For mass front them. Besides that one of the subject also explains commitment as willingness For make hard and enduring choices For face the consequences, for example when one of partner subject willing For stop smoking for the sake of his relationship and for the sake of his partner. View from each subject reflect deep understanding about bullet points important in build and maintain connection distance far away healthy and lasting.

But by facing problems and challenges in their relationship they live , the subjects explained that they felt satisfaction and happiness in their relationship. The satisfaction felt arises from good communication with their partner, getting attention from their partner, being able to solve problems experienced together without any interference from a third person and having a sense of mutual understanding between each other. In addition, the subjects also have hopes for the relationship they are currently in by hoping that the relationship they are in can reach the level of marriage and consider the LDR relationship they are in as a step towards a more serious level. This was explained in interviews conducted by RD, NM, KK and DT:

RD Interview

Sejauh ini saya merasa nyaman dengan hubungan ini dan saya bahagia...saya puas...Saat komunikasi yang kita jalani berjalan lancar...saya merasa diperhatikan,

disayang dan saya merasa bahagia akan perhatian itu.

So far I feel comfortable with this relationship and I am happy for ... satisfied ... When our communication goes smoothly ... I feel cared for, loved and I feel happy about that attention.

NM Interview

Saya merasa bahagia menjalani hubungan ini...saya merasa puas...ketika dia menunjukkan keseriusannya, usahanya, perhatiannya dan segala hal yang diberikan selama kami menjalani hubungan ini

I feel happy undergo This relationship ... I feel satisfied ... when he shows his seriousness, his efforts, his attention and everything that is given during our relationship.

KK Interview

Untuk saat ini saya sudah bahagia...saya merasa puas karena adanya rasa saling pengertian... saling membantu...saling support...saling mengerti dan memahami. For now I am happy ... I feel satisfied because there is a sense of mutual understanding ... helping each other ... supporting each other ... understanding and comprehending each other.

DT Interview

Saya sudah sangat bahagia...merasa sangat puas dengan hubungan ini karena kita bisa saling bertoleransi satu sama lain...berproses bareng...terus kalo ada masalah dibicarakan dan diselesaikan berdua tanpa ada campur tangan orang lain...

I'm already very happy ... feeling very satisfied with this relationship because we can tolerate each other ... go through the process together ... then if there is a problem, we discuss it and solve it together without anyone else interfering...

Interview results show that although undergo connection distance long distance (LDR) fourth subject feel satisfaction and happiness from the relationship they have live . Contributing factors to satisfaction felt covering existence attention from couples , smooth and good communication , have ability in finish problem in a way together and have a sense of mutual respect and understanding. RD emphasized importance good

communication as well as attention simple from couple. NM appreciates business his partner when finish problems and show his seriousness. KK emphasized importance support and respect each other even though separated by distance. And DT emphasizes tolerance, ability discuss and process for develop in a way together without involving mix hand party outside or party third. The striking similarities from all subject is view from every subject towards LDR as stage For going to more relationship Serious with hope For Can continue level marriage. This is show that although face challenge in the form of distance, but subject capable build more relationship satisfying, meaningful, developing together and have commitment in term long time .

Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that early adult women engaged in long-distance romantic relationships are able to maintain relationship satisfaction through various strategies they employ. Distance is not always perceived as a barrier but rather as a stimulus to engage in more intensive communication. Participants reported that they frequently utilized digital communication media such as video calls, instant messaging, and social media to sustain emotional intimacy with their partners (Dainton & Aylor, 2002; Stafford, 2010). This suggests that relationship satisfaction within long-distance relationships (LDRs) can be maintained through individuals creativity and adaptive capacity in responding to their circumstances (Borelli et al., 2015).

The evolution of LDR research demonstrates a significant paradigm shift before and after the digital era. Early studies in the 1980s and 1990s characterized LDRs as highly challenging due to limited communication channels such as telephone and postal correspondence (Stafford, 2005). However, with the rapid development of internet-based communication technologies in the early 2000s, the dynamics of LDRs have undergone a radical transformation (Holtzman et al., 2021). Recent studies reveal that technology not only facilitates communication but also enhances the quality of interaction between LDR partners, allowing them to experience intimacy levels comparable to or even higher than geographically close couples (Jiang & Hancock, 2013; Holtzman et al., 2021). These findings confirm that the digital era has reshaped the perception of LDRs from relationships that

“merely endure distance” to relationships with strong developmental potential (Stanley et al., 2019).

Comparative studies between married and unmarried LDR couples reveal intriguing differences in relational dynamics. Approximately 3.75 million married couples in the United States maintain long-distance relationships, primarily due to occupational or military obligations (Wikipedia, 2024). Research has shown that married LDR couples tend to have greater relationship stability due to legal commitment and long-term planning (Stanley et al., 2019). Conversely, unmarried LDR couples particularly among university students, of whom 25–75% have experienced long-distance relationships face distinct challenges such as uncertainty about the future and life transition stressors (Knox et al., 2002). Interestingly, 37% of LDR couples end their relationships within three months of geographic reunion, suggesting that challenges in LDRs lie not only in distance but also in the transition to physical proximity (Stafford, 2010). The present study, focusing on unmarried early adult women, provides insight into how this demographic group develops emotional and communicative strategies to sustain their relationships amid uncertainty (Murikkattu et al., 2024).

Most existing LDR research has employed quantitative methods to measure variables such as relationship satisfaction, commitment, and trust (Stanley et al., 2019; Taneja & Goyal, 2020). In contrast, qualitative particularly phenomenological approaches remain limited. The few phenomenological studies available have primarily focused on loneliness dynamics (Firmin et al., 2014), social media use (Murikkattu et al., 2024), and the experiences of international students (Amelia, 2020). In Indonesia, qualitative studies on this topic are scarce, with only a few exploring relationship quality among early adults in Surabaya (Ramadhani, 2022). Phenomenological inquiry offers a depth of understanding unattainable through quantitative surveys, as it uncovers subjective meanings and individuals’ interpretative processes concerning their LDR experiences. Therefore, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by applying a phenomenological approach to early adult women in Indonesia.

Psychological variables most frequently examined in LDR contexts include: (1) relationship satisfaction as a key indicator of relational well-being (Taneja & Goyal, 2020); (2)

commitment consistently higher among LDR couples compared to geographically close ones (Stanley et al., 2019); (3) trust encompassing dimensions of predictability, dependability, and faith (Rempel et al., 1985); (4) intimacy surprisingly higher in LDRs due to deeper self-disclosure (Jiang & Hancock, 2013; Borelli et al., 2015); (5) jealousy and relational uncertainty (Dainton & Aylor, 2002); (6) attachment styles which moderate how individuals manage separation (Bouchhard et al., 2025); (7) mental well-being including depression and loneliness (Firmin et al., 2014); and (8) relational maintenance behaviors such as positivity, openness, and assurances (Stafford & Merolla, 2007). This study specifically explores how relationship satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and communication strategies interact within the subjective experiences of early adult women in Indonesia.

The findings align with Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love, which emphasizes intimacy, passion, and commitment as the foundation of romantic relationships. Within the context of LDRs, intimacy is manifested not through physical proximity but through emotionally intensive and consistent communication. These results also reinforce previous research highlighting the critical role of communication technologies in maintaining relationship quality across distance. However, this study offers new insights by showing that distance is not solely perceived as a challenge but also reinterpreted by participants as an opportunity to deepen communication and strengthen relational trust.

Interestingly, this study reveals that distance can yield positive effects within relationships. Several participants viewed distance as an opportunity for personal growth, fostering independence, trust, and improved communication quality with their partners (Bouchard et al., 2025). The separation allowed them to appreciate shared moments more deeply and cultivate healthy longing, which made the relationship feel more meaningful (Stafford, 2010). Distance was also perceived as a buffer against relational boredom, as each interaction whether via messages or in-person meetings became more cherished (Borelli et al., 2015). Thus, distance is not merely a barrier but also serves as a catalyst for strengthening emotional bonds and enhancing relationship satisfaction.

The implications of these findings are significant both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on LDR dynamics by demonstrating that the emotional strategies of early adult women such as the creative use of social media and video calls serve as key mechanisms for maintaining intimacy and satisfaction. It also broadens the understanding of post-pandemic LDR experiences, highlighting how the normalization of digital communication has reshaped expectations and relational maintenance practices (Murikkattu et al., 2024). Methodologically, the phenomenological approach contributes to the largely quantitative LDR literature by emphasizing the value of exploring subjective meanings and lived experiences. Practically, these findings offer valuable insights for relationship counseling, particularly for couples navigating long-distance relationships. Counselors can support individuals in developing healthy and creative communication strategies to maintain relationship harmony despite physical separation. Overall, this study not only illustrates participants' lived experiences but also contributes to a broader understanding of how relationship satisfaction can be sustained in the context of long-distance romantic relationships.

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the study only involved early adult female participants, so the results cannot be generalized to men or married couples. Second, this study was qualitative with a limited number of participants, making the findings more exploratory and contextual. Third, the study focused solely on individual experiences in Indonesia, so caution is needed when relating the findings to other cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, this study makes important contributions. First, it enriches the literature on relationship satisfaction in the context of long-distance relationships, particularly among young adult women in Indonesia. Second, it provides contextual understanding of adaptive strategies employed to address the challenges of long-distance relationships in the digital age. Third, this study can serve as a foundation for further research, for example, involving male participants, married couples, or using a quantitative approach to broaden our understanding of the dynamics of long-distance relationships.

Conclusion

This study reveals that young adult women in long-distance relationships (LDR) continue to experience satisfaction and happiness from their

relationships despite facing various challenges. Effective communication, attentiveness from their partners, and the ability to solve problems together are key factors in achieving this satisfaction. Strong trust and commitment also play a crucial role in maintaining the relationship's consistency with the initial goals they established together. The hope of continuing the relationship to marriage becomes a reference point when facing problems, so that LDR are seen not merely as obstacles but as a strengthening stage of the relationship towards marriage. These findings provide new insights that young adult women in long-distance relationships not only tolerate distance but also view it as a positive aspect, using it as a trigger for more intensive communication and a mechanism for strengthening long-term commitment..

Based on these findings, it is recommended that couples in LDR pay more attention to the quality of their communication, openness in resolving problems, and maintaining the goals and expectations of their relationship. Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain trust and commitment, and create small, meaningful moments to maintain emotional closeness despite the distance.

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