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## THE ATTITUDES AND INTENTION OF MARRIAGE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN GREATER JAKARTA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Currently society is experiencing a decline in marriage rates among young adults, despite previous studies showing the relation between marriage and psychological, cognitive, and physical wellbeing. This study investigated the attitudes of marriage held by Indonesian young adults living in Greater Jakarta. A total of 140 young adult participated in this study, with ages ranging from 17 to 25 years old. The Marriage Scale developed by Park and Rosén (2013) used to measure intention to marry, attitudes toward marriage, and six aspects in marriages. The results show that young adults in Greater Jakarta have intention to marry and have a rather positive attitude toward marriage as shown in higher rate of positive attitude and lower negative attitude. However, there was an elevated level of fear/doubt toward marriage among the participants. As for the aspects of marriage, participants consider all six aspects measured as important, however respect is considered as the most important aspect for a successful marriage, and while physical intimacy is important, it was not as important as other aspects. Implication of the study discussed in the paper.

**Keywords:** Attitude toward marriage, intention to marry, young adult.

### 1. PREFACE

Marriage has been a fundamental institution in human societies for centuries, shaping both society, groups, and individual lives. However, societal norms and values have changed over time, significantly influencing perceptions of marriage (Booth & Verhulst, 2023). This is reflected in the increasing number of young adults who are delaying marriage or choosing not to get married at all. For example, a Pew Research Center survey found that only 17% of 9,834 respondents in the United States believed that marriage is essential for a fulfilling life (Horowitz et al., 2019). A more recent survey by the Thriving Center of Psychology (2023) found that more than 15% of younger people do not intend to get married, and nearly 50% of respondents regarded marriage as an outdated tradition. Similar trends have been observed among young adults in Indonesia. The number of young people who want to or are already married in Indonesia has decreased compared to previous years. According to the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021), the percentage of unmarried youth in Indonesia has increased drastically in the last decade. In 2021, the number of unmarried youths reached 61.09%, a rapid increase from the previous year, namely 59.82%. This is even more highlighted when compared to the percentage of unmarried youth in 2011 which only reached 51.98%. These figures illustrate how the new generation is less ready to marry conventionally than previous generations. Furthermore, a survey of Gen Z and millennial respondents found that more than 20% of participants had no plans to get married (Populix, 2023). The declining rates of marriage present a multifaceted problem with far-reaching consequences from a psychological standpoint.

Several studies show that marriage has been associated with well-being (Becker et al., 2019; Jebb et al., 2020), loneliness (Buecker et al., 2021; Pinquart, 2003; Wrzus et al., 2013), depression (Buckman et al., 2021), cognitive health (Liu et al., 2020), and physical health (Kojima et al., 2020). In general, both empirical and meta-analytics studies found that married



people show better mental, cognitive, and physical health compared to unmarried people. According to psychosocial development theory, one of the stages of maturation begins with establishing interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex, pairing up, and getting married. It is assumed that young adults will think more about preparations for marriage because preparation for marriage is one manifestation of young adults' developmental tasks. According to Erikson (Santrock, 2015), young adulthood is known as the development stage of intimacy vs isolation. The marriage readiness factor according to young adults consists of several factors, namely emotional, social, financial, role, sexual and mature age readiness (Sari & Sunarti, 2013). There are differences between marriage readiness factors according to men and according to women. According to men, readiness for marriage is financial readiness, emotional readiness, role readiness, physical readiness, spiritual readiness, and social readiness. Meanwhile, the factors of readiness for marriage according to women are emotional readiness, role readiness, financial readiness, and physical readiness, sexual readiness, and spiritual readiness. There is a difference in the order of readiness factors between men and women, where men prioritize financial readiness because men tend to carry the burden of responsibility as the main breadwinner. Meanwhile, women prioritize emotional and role readiness factors related to the main caregiving role that many women play in marriage.

In terms of age, previous study found that the average ideal age for marriage for men was 26.31 and for women 23.98 years (Sari & Sunarti, 2013). This research also found that the average value for men wanting to get married was 26.31 years and for women 24.24 years. With this age level, it can be seen that individuals of this age in 2023 are expected to be born in 1997-2000, which is the millennial generation/generation Z. Generation Z is the generation with the largest population proportion based on the 2020 population census, namely 27.94% of the entire population of Indonesia (BPS, 2021). Those included in this generation are those born between 1997-2012 or aged 10-25 years (BPS, 2021). Generation Z is divided into two groups, namely those who are still in school and those who are starting to pursue a career in the world of work. Generation Z is a new workforce in the world of work which was previously dominated by the Millennial Generation, Generation X and late generation of Baby Boomers.

A survey conducted by Harris Poll shows that Generation Z is a creative generation, and they are digital natives (Pineda, 2020). They are a generation that has grown up along with the development of digital technology. This means that this generation cannot be separated from digital technology. However, another survey conducted by Randstad showed that employees aged 18 up to 24 years, which is the age range for generation Z, most of them would rather stop working than be unhappy (Kim, 2022). Marital role expectations for each individual differ depending on their individual experiences. For example, how to interact within the family, experiences with parents, and descriptions of how marriage is carried out. Marital role expectations are also influenced by the environment, parents, school, peers, media, and culture that teaches how roles are carried out (Bugental & Grusec, in Santrock, 2015). Family characteristics that influence marriage readiness are parents' education, parents' income, and parents' completeness (Sari & Sunarti, 2013). These expectations will influence how perceptions of marriage will be formed. Supported by research conducted by Abdurrahman et al. (2020) showed that the results of interviews with nine students in their early adulthood were not ready to get married due to several aspects such as physiological aspects, psychological aspects, and socio-economic aspects. In interviews with students from harmonious families, only one student was ready to get married. The other five students are not yet ready to get married due to a career plan and life partner criteria. Then there were two students from disharmonious families but were ready to get married, caused by longing for affection, wanting to be guided, and wanting to be

cared for. There is also one student who comes from a disharmonious family but not ready to get married. This research shows that there is a possibility or uncertainty in the hypothesis that children who come from harmonious families will be willing or ready to marry compared to children who come from disharmonious families.

Addressing the issue of low marriage rates among young adults requires an understanding of the underlying psychological processes that influence individuals' decisions regarding marriage. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the attitudes of marriage held by Indonesian young adults by understanding their perspectives, more efficacious interventions can be tailored to promote their intention to marry.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study included a sample of 140 Indonesian young adults living in Greater Jakarta, with a mean age of 19.64 years ( $SD = 2.02$ ). The gender distribution was 21.4% male ( $n=29$ ) and 78.6% female ( $n=111$ ). The majority of participants were undergraduate students (83.6%), with a smaller number of participants in high school (14.3%) and graduate school (0.7%). Most participants lived with their parents (72.1%), but a significant minority lived alone (22.1%). The majority of participants perceived their parents' relationship as harmonious (75.0%), with a smaller number of participants reporting that their parents' relationship was not harmonious, divorced, or separated. Finally, most participants were single (65.0%), with a smaller number of participants in a relationship (35.0%).

The Marital Scales developed by Park and Rosén (2013) were used to measure intention to marry, attitude toward marriage, and expectations for six aspects of marriage: romance, respect, trust, finances, meaning, and physical intimacy. Participant respond the statement using 0-6 Likert scale (0=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree). The scale is translated into Bahasa Indonesia by a person with psychological background proficient in English and Bahasa Indonesia. All of the scales showed good internal consistency, as indicated by McDonald's Omega values ranging from 0.642 to 0.849. Intention to marry was measured by three items asking participants how likely they were to get married.

Attitude toward marriage was measured by three dimensions: (a) positive attitudes: five items such as "marriages make people happy"; (b) negative attitudes: three items such as "people should not marry"; and (c) fears/doubts: three items such as "I am fearful of marriage." Expectations for six aspects of marriage were measured by six scales, each with three to five items: (a) romance: three items such as "romance is important for a successful marriage"; (b) respect: five items, such as "staying faithful to one another is valuable for a good marriage"; (c) trust: five items such as "Trust is important for a good marriage."; (d) finances: three items such as "Financial stability is important for a good marriage"; (e) meaning: four items such as "shared values between partners are valuable for a good marriage"; and (f) physical intimacy: three items such as "sexual intimacy is valuable for a healthy marriage". One of the items from financial aspect was not included in the final analysis due to low item-rest correlation ( $r=0.006$ ), and the estimated McDonald's Omega if the item excluded is 0.73 ("Financial stability is not valuable for a successful marriage").

Information about recruitment for participant, participant criteria, and links to the research questionnaire were shared via the researchers' social media. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants see more complete information about this research, then fill out informed consent if they are willing to take part in the research. Then, participants were asked to fill in demographic data, followed by filling in The Marriage Scale.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the result of descriptive statistics of participants response toward the Marriage Scales. In general, young adults in Greater Jakarta have the intention to marry and have a rather positive attitude toward marriage as shown in a higher rate of positive attitude and lower negative attitude. However, there was an elevated level of fear/doubt toward marriage among the participants. As for the aspects of marriage, participants consider all six aspects measured as important, however respect considered as the most important aspect for a successful marriage, and while physical intimacy is important, it was not as important as other aspect.

Based on sex, there is no significant mean differences in intention to get married, attitudes toward marriage, and aspects considered important in marriage between male and female. However, based on participants' perception of their parents' marriage, it can be seen that those whose parents are divorced have lower intention to get married and a more negative attitude towards marriage (lower general attitude, positive attitude, higher negative attitude, and higher fear/doubt) compared with participants with harmonious parents, not harmonious, and separated. Similarly, participants whose perceived their parents' relationship as not harmonious and separated also shows lower intention to get married and negative attitude toward marriage compared to participants with harmonious parents. Interestingly, there are no notable differences between the participants in term of aspect of marriage that they perceived as important. Lastly, based on relationship status, participants in a relationship tend to show higher intention to get married and have positive attitude toward marriage compared with single participants.

**Table 1**

*The mean and standard deviation of The Marriage Scale scores overall and by sex, perception of parents' marriage and current relationship status*

Factor	N	IM	GA	PA	NA*	FD*	MN	RM	TR	FN	RS	PI
<b>General</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>4.70</b> (1.32)	<b>3.59</b> (0.93)	<b>3.80</b> (1.02)	<b>4.05</b> (0.95)	<b>2.83</b> (1.59)	<b>4.73</b> (0.86)	<b>4.95</b> (0.89)	<b>5.59</b> (0.55)	<b>5.43</b> (0.84)	<b>5.71</b> (0.50)	<b>4.43</b> (1.02)
<b>Sex</b>												
Male	29	4.49 (1.46)	3.69 (1.07)	3.81 (1.25)	4.15 (1.13)	3.07 (1.64)	4.62 (0.92)	4.75 (0.96)	5.41 (0.59)	5.21 (1.11)	5.61 (0.51)	4.37 (0.96)
Female	111	4.76 (1.29)	3.56 (0.89)	3.80 (0.97)	4.02 (0.91)	2.77 (1.58)	4.76 (0.85)	5.00 (0.87)	5.64 (0.53)	5.49 (0.76)	5.75 (0.50)	4.45 (1.04)
<b>Perception of parents' marital condition</b>												
Harmonious	105	4.87 (1.27)	3.75 (0.89)	3.89 (1.01)	4.21 (0.92)	3.10 (1.55)	4.79 (0.86)	4.96 (0.91)	5.60 (0.56)	5.43 (0.79)	5.74 (0.49)	4.50 (1.00)
Not Harmonious	18	4.50 (1.06)	3.18 (0.99)	3.69 (1.01)	3.54 (0.93)	2.13 (1.57)	4.47 (0.74)	4.87 (0.92)	5.47 (0.55)	5.39 (1.14)	5.66 (0.50)	4.44 (1.24)
Separated	7	4.05 (1.54)	3.20 (0.93)	3.61 (1.42)	4.14 (0.57)	1.71 (1.90)	4.71 (1.28)	5.14 (0.84)	5.86 (0.15)	5.36 (1.18)	5.91 (0.23)	4.19 (0.90)
Divorced	10	3.73 (1.73)	2.87 (0.63)	3.20 (0.83)	3.27 (0.93)	2.03 (0.92)	4.63 (0.79)	4.83 (0.82)	5.50 (0.54)	5.55 (0.55)	5.50 (0.77)	3.87 (0.80)
<b>Relationship status</b>												
Single	91	4.39 (1.33)	3.38 (0.85)	3.54 (0.96)	3.96 (1.01)	2.60 (1.41)	4.71 (0.87)	4.74 (0.96)	5.54 (0.59)	5.40 (0.91)	5.71 (0.48)	4.33 (1.02)
In a relationship	49	5.29 (1.11)	3.97 (0.95)	4.30 (0.96)	4.22 (0.81)	3.27 (1.82)	4.77 (0.86)	5.35 (0.58)	5.68 (0.44)	5.50 (0.71)	5.73 (0.56)	4.63 (1.01)

Note: IM=Intention to get married; GA=General attitudes; PA=Positive attitude; NA=Negative attitude; FD=Fear/doubt; MN=Meaning; RM=Romance; TR=Trust; FN=Financial; RS=Respect; PI=Physical intimacy. Numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviation.

\* Higher scores indicate a lower level of negative attitude and fear/doubt toward marriage.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Young adults in Greater Jakarta have positive attitudes and intentions towards marriage, as evidenced by a higher rate of positive attitudes and a lower rate of negative attitudes. There is a significant correlation between intention to marry and attitude towards marriage: higher positive attitudes towards marriage correspond with higher intention to get married, while negative attitudes and fear/doubt towards marriage correspond with lower intention to get married.

However, there is an elevated level of fear/doubt towards marriage among the participants. Of the six aspects of marriage are considered important, but respect is considered the most important aspect for a successful marriage. Physical intimacy, while important, is not as important as other aspects. The research results show that young adults in Greater Jakarta still have positive attitudes and intentions to marry even though they come from harmonious, disharmonious, divorced, and separated families. This is likely because they have confidence that they will not make the same mistakes as their parents. They are also more supported by information from social media, for example, regarding aspects and factors related to marital satisfaction/wellbeing.

Respect is considered important because the younger generation considers it something that needs to be achieved and obtained from the environment, including from their partners. Meanwhile, physical intimacy, which is considered less important, is actually one of the factors that determine marital satisfaction. Therefore, premarital counseling and seminars on marriage readiness are the right way for young adults to increase their knowledge about the foundation of marital life, mentality, and commitment preparation before marriage.

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