Marriage Anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials: An Islamic Family Law Perspective

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Abstract:

This study investigates the phenomenon of marriage anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia. This concern has become increasingly relevant amid modern social, cultural, and religious shifts. The research aims to understand the factors influencing young people's perceptions of marriage, including economic instability, digital media influence, and evolving gender roles, and to propose a reinterpretation of Islamic family law to address contemporary concerns. Findings reveal that financial pressures, lack of religious education, societal expectations, and the influence of social media contribute significantly to the fear of marriage. Additionally, the study highlights the need for a more flexible and equitable approach to marital readiness, with a focus on emotional, social, and financial preparedness. Employing a normative qualitative research method, the study combines sociological and Islamic legal perspectives to offer a comprehensive understanding of marriage anxiety. The research concludes that addressing these fears through a blend of cultural, religious, and socioeconomic support can foster healthier perceptions of marriage and promote its value in modern society. The study contributes to the renewal of marriage concepts, ensuring their relevance in contemporary Indonesia.

Key Words: *Fear of Marriage, Generation Z, Islamic Family Law, Influence of Social Media*

Abstrak:

Studi ini meneliti fenomena kecemasan pernikahan di kalangan Generasi Z dan Milenial di Indonesia. Kekhawatiran ini menjadi semakin relevan di tengah pergeseran sosial, budaya, dan agama modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi persepsi kaum muda tentang pernikahan, termasuk ketidakstabilan ekonomi, pengaruh media digital, dan peran gender yang berkembang, serta untuk mengusulkan reinterpretasi hukum keluarga Islam untuk mengatasi kekhawatiran kontemporer. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tekanan finansial, kurangnya pendidikan agama, harapan masyarakat, dan pengaruh media sosial berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap rasa takut menikah. Selain itu, studi ini menyoroti perlunya pendekatan yang lebih fleksibel dan adil terhadap kesiapan pernikahan, dengan fokus pada kesiapan emosional, sosial, dan finansial. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif normatif, studi ini menggabungkan perspektif sosiologis dan hukum Islam untuk menawarkan pemahaman komprehensif tentang kecemasan pernikahan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengatasi ketakutan ini melalui perpaduan dukungan budaya, agama, dan sosial-ekonomi dapat menumbuhkan persepsi yang lebih sehat tentang pernikahan dan meningkatkan

nilainya dalam masyarakat modern. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pembaharuan konsep pernikahan, memastikan relevansinya di Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Ketakutan terhadap Pernikahan, Generasi Z, Hukum Keluarga Islam, Pengaruh Media Sosial*

INTRODUCTION

This research is crucial for society because the phenomenon of marriage anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials has become an increasingly salient issue in social, cultural, and religious contexts (Mostafapour et al., 2025). According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), the number of child marriages in Indonesia has significantly decreased, but this phenomenon is not just about statistics; it reflects deeper social changes (Hanapi et al., 2025; Idawati et al., 2024). The fear of marriage, once regarded as a path to achieving sakinah (peace) and warrahma (blessings), has now become a psychological and social burden (Said et al., 2024). In a society such as Indonesia, where marriage is a deeply rooted tradition, this shift warrants further attention to the factors shaping young people's perceptions of marriage (Pakasi et al., 2024). This study is important because it aims to understand societal dynamics and to propose an approach that ensures that marriage remains a valued institution rather than a source of fear.

In Indonesia, marriage remains highly cherished, both culturally and religiously (Himawan et al., 2024). However there is a growing fear of marriage among Generation Z and Millennials, who now view it as burdensome, problematic, or even torturous. Economic factors do not just drive this fear but is also influenced by the rise in domestic violence, infidelity, and divorce rates. The data shows that the average age of marriage is rising, while the age of first sexual intercourse among teenagers is declining (Dommaraju et al., 2024; Osgood, 2023). This phenomenon warrants deeper investigation into how perceptions of marriage are evolving in a society exposed to digital media and undergoing significant social change. This research seeks to explore the relationship between marriage anxiety and evolving social dynamics, along with the role of Islamic family law in shaping contemporary views of marriage.

Marriage anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia has become increasingly evident in social media discussions, particularly on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Sari et al., 2025; Ramadhan et al., 2025). Many viral posts portray marriage as a burdensome, restricting, and overwhelming experience (Putri, 2025). This perception is especially prominent among women, who remain trapped within a strong patriarchal system. Women in Indonesia often carry the weight of responsibilities within marriage, from menstruation and pregnancy to childbirth, breastfeeding, and balancing work both at home and outside (Setyonaluri et al., 2024). This has further contributed to the growing fear of marriage, as it is seen as a system that restricts personal freedom. While child marriage rates have decreased, there is an increasing prevalence of premarital sexual activity and related issues, highlighting the

tension between traditional values and the contemporary realities faced by young people today (Nurliana, 2022).

Research on attitudes toward marriage and fear of it within the context of Islam and society has been increasingly conducted by scholars. Some previous studies have examined public perceptions of marriage and its influence by social and economic factors. However, most of these studies have primarily focused on the legal aspects of marriage, such as the issue of child marriage, without delving deeper into the fear or anxiety surrounding marriage that is emerging among the younger generation, especially Muslims. Most prior studies emphasize Islamic legal views on marriage and neglect the broader impact of social media and wider societal changes on young people's attitudes toward marriage. A significant gap in these studies is the lack of focus on the psychological and social factors that shape perceptions of marriage in the digital age.

Although studies have examined the relationship between societal changes and perceptions of marriage, a significant gap remains in understanding how digital content, such as social media, influences the views of Generation Z and Millennials on marriage. Many prior studies overlook how the rise of online platforms has reshaped attitudes, particularly in cultures where traditional marriage is highly valued. Additionally, the intersection of Islamic family law with modern social realities remains underexplored, particularly regarding how young people interpret religious teachings in relation to contemporary issues such as financial pressures, changing gender roles, and the influence of digital media. This research is essential because it will fill this gap, providing a comprehensive analysis of how the current generation perceives marriage.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to understanding the fear of marriage among Generation Z and Millennials within the context of Islamic family law and contemporary social changes. This study will combine legal and sociological perspectives to examine the changing dynamics of marriage in the digital era. It will also explore how Islamic teachings on marriage are interpreted in a modern context, with a focus on how they can be reconciled with evolving socio-economic realities and cultural shifts that have shaped young people's views on marriage. This research is necessary because it will offer new insights into the social and religious factors shaping contemporary attitudes toward marriage and provide valuable recommendations for policymakers and religious leaders.

The main research problem is to understand why Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia are increasingly fearful of marriage and how this fear relates to changing social, economic, and cultural factors, as well as to interpretations of Islamic family law. Preliminary arguments suggest that the burden of traditional gender roles, economic insecurity, and the influence of digital media essentially drives this fear. The contribution of this research lies in its contextual reinterpretation of Islamic marriage law, ensuring its continued relevance in modern times. This study will provide a framework for addressing

marriage anxiety by reconciling Islamic teachings with contemporary societal realities, helping to reshape the narrative surrounding marriage in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a normative qualitative research design. Normative research is chosen because it focuses on analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating legal norms, societal behaviors, and religious teachings, particularly in the context of marriage within Generation Z and Millennials. The normative approach is well-suited to exploring how Islamic family law, social norms, and contemporary issues intersect, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the fear of marriage. By employing this approach, the research aims to assess the alignment between traditional values and contemporary concerns, particularly in a rapidly changing digital society. This method is crucial for understanding the socio-legal dimensions of marriage from a normative lens while considering the evolving dynamics of marital relationships among young people.

This research is conducted in Indonesia, with particular focus on the experiences and perspectives of Generation Z and Millennials. Indonesia was selected as the research location due to its unique cultural, religious, and social context, where marriage holds significant religious and societal value. However, the country is also witnessing shifts in perceptions of marriage, particularly among younger generations. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have influenced attitudes toward marriage, making Indonesia a compelling case for studying marriage anxiety and related social phenomena. The choice of location is further justified by the increasing trend of digital content shaping youth opinions on relationships and marriage, offering valuable insights into how cultural and religious teachings are perceived in a modern context

Data collection for this study utilizes a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data includes social media observations, particularly from Instagram, TikTok, and other relevant platforms, to capture real-time trends and discussions surrounding marriage anxiety, relationship crises, childfree choices, and the "no-marriage-move-on" movements. Secondary data are gathered from scientific articles, reports, and prior studies that provide context for marriage trends and generational perceptions. Additionally, Quranic verses are analyzed to elucidate the religious teachings on marriage and their relevance to contemporary issues. Library research underpins data collection, drawing on existing literature to examine the legal, sociological, and theological perspectives on marriage.

The data analysis process follows a systematic approach. The first step involves data condensation, in which irrelevant or excessive data are filtered out to focus on key themes related to marriage anxiety, generational trends, and Islamic teachings. Next, data reduction occurs, in which data are categorized into meaningful themes and concepts related to fear of marriage, gender roles, and

social media influence. The display of data occurs by organizing and presenting the findings through thematic analysis, allowing a clearer understanding of the key issues surrounding marriage perceptions among young people. Lastly, data verification is conducted to ensure the findings are credible and consistent, employing triangulation methods such as cross-referencing various data sources and literature to validate the conclusions.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, several techniques are used. First, triangulation is employed by using multiple sources of data, such as Quranic verses, social media content, and existing literature, to cross-check findings and minimize biases. Additionally, peer debriefing is used, where experts in the fields of Islamic family law, sociology, and psychology are consulted to review the research design and findings for accuracy and comprehensiveness. Lastly, member checking is performed, particularly with participants from relevant social media platforms, to confirm the accuracy of the data interpretations and ensure that the conclusions drawn reflect the real experiences and views of Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Factors Behind the Fear of Marriage Phenomenon Among Gen Z and Millennial Muslims in Indonesia

The findings of this study reveal several key factors contributing to the fear of marriage among Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia. These factors align with, but also expand upon, existing literature. One significant finding is the role of economic instability, which is cited as a major concern for young people in their decision to avoid marriage. As economic pressures intensify, including rising cost of living and the difficulty of securing stable employment, many members of Generation Z and Millennials feel unprepared for the financial responsibilities that marriage entails (Nadiatusholikha et al., 2024). This is consistent with earlier research indicating that economic hardship is a significant barrier to marriage, particularly for young people (Khalil & Santoso, 2022). However, the study goes further by highlighting the specific anxiety caused by being part of the "sandwich generation," which adds a layer of social and familial responsibility, further exacerbating the fear of taking on the commitments of marriage. This additional burden has not been emphasized as firmly in prior studies, indicating a gap in the literature that this research has addressed.

Another prominent finding is the lack of religious character education at home, which has led to a shift in priorities for marriage among Generation Z and Millennials. While Islamic teachings prioritize marriage based on faith and good character (Diniya et al., 2023), the study found that many young people today place greater importance on personal lifestyle and material success rather than religious or moral considerations. This divergence from traditional norms highlights the influence of modern societal trends and individualization, as noted in other studies. However, this study adds a nuanced perspective by showing how the absence of religious upbringing is not only a religious concern but also

a socio-cultural issue, which weakens the understanding of marriage as a lifelong commitment.

The influence of digital culture is another critical factor discussed in this research, and it emerges as one of the most significant contributors to marriage anxiety. The study found that the abundance of social media content depicting unrealistic expectations of marriage, alongside high-profile divorces and the portrayal of toxic relationships, fosters a pervasive fear of marriage among young people (Rahmah & Atika, 2025). This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight how social media influences young people's perceptions of relationships (Marini et al., 2022). However, this research emphasizes the deeper psychological effects of constant exposure to negative portrayals of marriage, which can create a sense of futility or reluctance toward entering such relationships. This gap in the literature underscores the importance of understanding the psychological impact of digital media on perceptions of marriage.

The pressure of traditional customs also emerges as a significant factor contributing to marriage anxiety. The study found that excessive dowries, parental-set partner criteria, and other financial demands often discourage young people from pursuing marriage. While Islam permits flexibility in marriage practices, the study highlights how social customs often complicate the process, creating financial and emotional barriers that hinder the pursuit of marriage. This issue aligns with existing research on the impact of traditional customs on marriage, particularly in countries with strong cultural expectations. However, this research brings attention to the emotional consequences of these pressures, including depression and suicidal tendencies, which are not always discussed in the broader literature.

The research highlights the growing trend of individualization and self-prioritization, which has led many from Generation Z and Millennials to prioritize career, personal freedom, and mental health over marriage. This aligns with global trends in which younger generations are more focused on individual goals rather than traditional family structures (Bahjatunnisa, 2024). The study goes beyond merely identifying this trend by emphasizing the spiritual and societal consequences of neglecting marriage as an essential institution for achieving peace and fulfilling religious obligations (Nurliana, 2022). This provides a more comprehensive view of the implications of individualization, linking it to both personal well-being and collective societal health, which has not been extensively explored in existing literature.

In terms of theoretical and practical implications, the study contributes to understanding how contemporary socioeconomic pressures, digital culture, and shifting religious values shape perceptions of marriage among young Muslims in Indonesia. Theoretically, it expands on existing models of marriage anxiety by incorporating socio-economic, cultural, and digital factors that have been underexplored. In practice, the findings suggest that efforts to address marriage anxiety should adopt a holistic approach, integrating economic support, religious

education, and digital literacy to help young people navigate marriage in the contemporary world. This approach can be implemented by policymakers, religious leaders, and educators to support the younger generation in overcoming the fear of marriage and fostering a more positive outlook on this important institution.

Interdisciplinary Contributions from the Integration of Sociology and Islamic Law to the Renewal of the Concept of Readiness for Marriage in Modern Society or Gen Z and Millennials

The findings of this study reveal that the fear of marriage among Generation Z and Millennials is rooted in the increasing influence of the modern digital world and the pervasive social behavior observed on social media. The research highlights that marriage, traditionally seen through the lens of procreation and the fulfillment of lust in classical Islamic jurisprudence, has evolved in the eyes of many young people today. Marriage is now viewed as a potential source of tranquility (sakinah), love (muwaddah), and compassion (warrahma), but also a daunting responsibility, primarily due to the perceived emotional, financial, and social pressures (Furqon et al., 2025; Fatima, 2023). This contrasts with the traditional understanding of marriage, which emphasizes emotional and psychological fulfillment. Existing literature supports the notion that fear of marriage is linked to economic instability and social expectations, yet this research extends the discussion by focusing on the evolving role of social media in shaping perceptions about marriage (Helal et al., 2024). The findings suggest that social media's portrayal of marriage often unrealistic and idealized contributes significantly to the anxiety young people experience. This aligns with studies by Rahmah & Atika (2025), who similarly emphasize the impact of digital content on societal attitudes toward marriage. However, the research also identifies the need for a broader approach to understanding marriage, incorporating a psychological and social perspective, which has been less explored in previous studies.

One of the core contributions of this study is the emphasis on gender justice within marriage, which remains a fundamental principle in Islamic law. While traditional roles often place the husband as the primary provider and the wife as a homemaker, the study highlights the importance of equitable partnerships where both spouses share responsibilities according to their abilities. This is aligned with the teachings of Islam, which stress mutual understanding of rights and obligations, emphasizing that both men and women should support each other in their roles. The literature on gender roles in marriage, particularly within the context of Islam, underscores the need for a balanced division of labor and roles. However, this research further extends the discussion by proposing that communication before marriage is crucial in establishing fairness and ensuring mental readiness, a suggestion that complements previous studies on the importance of premarital education

(Oktaviani & Krismono, 2025). This focus on fairness and open communication before marriage addresses the social concerns of young people today who may fear unequal relationships, which could lead to dysfunction and resentment.

Additionally, the study's findings on flexibility in livelihood matters offer a modern interpretation of Islamic marriage laws. The research underscores the importance of supporting women's economic empowerment through work and entrepreneurship while maintaining Islamic values. This is consistent with the findings of Carlström et al (2023) who argues that Islamic teachings support women's rights to work and engage in economic activities. However, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding by emphasizing that such flexibility should be balanced with ethical conduct and respect for the rights of both spouses. The exploration of this flexibility contrasts with traditional views that often place women in more restrictive roles, thus offering a more progressive and inclusive interpretation of Islamic marriage law that adapts to contemporary social realities. The research suggests that allowing women to work and be entrepreneurial can contribute to the overall well-being of the family, as long as it does not compromise Islamic ethical principles, thereby offering a fresh perspective on the evolving role of women in marriage.

The psychological and emotional readiness for marriage is another key theme that emerges from the research. The fear of marriage, driven by uncertainty about the future, marital conflict, and financial insecurity, reflects broader societal shifts where marriage is no longer seen as an inevitable milestone but rather a complex decision fraught with risks. The research findings corroborate existing literature on the psychological burden of marriage, particularly regarding financial fears and the anxiety associated with marital roles (Nadiatusholikha et al., 2024). This study goes beyond merely identifying these factors by emphasizing the need for more inclusive premarital education, which integrates psychological, social, and religious aspects. This approach is essential for helping the younger generation navigate marriage decisions, as it provides a more holistic understanding of marital responsibilities and addresses the emotional fears that many young people experience. By including both Islamic legal perspectives and contemporary psychological insights, the research contributes to a more comprehensive framework for preparing young people for marriage.

The study underscores the role of Islamic teachings in addressing marriage-related fears. It argues that a return to the spiritual and conceptual values of marriage, as articulated in the Quran, can provide solace to young people who are apprehensive about marriage. The Quran presents marriage as a source of tranquility (sakinah), love (muwaddah), compassion (rahmah), and fulfillment of divine purposes, thus offering a counter-narrative to the negative portrayals of marriage in modern society. This aligns with the insights of Rahma (2025), who emphasizes the Quran's response to the fear of marriage by constructing a narrative of peace and spiritual fulfillment. The findings suggest

that a deeper understanding of these teachings can help mitigate the fears surrounding marriage, offering both spiritual guidance and practical solutions. This theoretical contribution highlights the importance of integrating religious teachings with contemporary issues to provide a more balanced, supportive approach to marriage in the modern era. The practical implication is that by cultivating a positive narrative around marriage based on Islamic values, societies can help the younger generation develop a more balanced and hopeful view of marriage, which may ultimately lead to healthier relationships and a stronger commitment to the institution of marriage.

CONCLUSION

The research highlights that the fear of marriage among Generation Z and Millennials is a rational social phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors, including economic instability, shifting generational values, personal relational experiences, and the tension between traditional norms and modernity. These factors create a complex landscape in which marriage is no longer viewed solely as a social or religious obligation but as a decision fraught with emotional, financial, and social anxieties. The study underscores the importance of understanding marriage not as an obligatory institution but as a mutually beneficial, compassionate, and peaceful union that can contribute to individual and societal well-being. The integration of sociology and Islamic law provides a comprehensive perspective on how marriage can be redefined in contemporary society, emphasizing the need for a more adaptable, equitable, and spiritually fulfilling approach to marital readiness. The lessons from this study indicate that by addressing the fears surrounding marriage through a blend of cultural, religious, and socio-economic awareness we can foster healthier perceptions of marriage among younger generations.

This study contributes significantly to the academic discourse by integrating sociology with Islamic law to offer a nuanced understanding of the fear of marriage phenomenon. The interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper exploration of the structural, cultural, and religious dimensions of marriage, particularly in the context of Generation Z and Millennials. The study's key contributions include providing a fresh perspective on marriage readiness, focusing on the importance of emotional, social, and financial preparedness in modern relationships. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for gender equity and flexibility in marital expectations, especially concerning financial matters. This research contributes to the renewal of Islamic legal principles on marriage, making them more relevant and adaptable to contemporary societal dynamics. The theoretical insights presented here pave the way for future research in both sociology and Islamic studies, particularly in understanding the evolving roles of marriage in modern society.

While this study offers valuable insights, it has certain limitations that future research can address. First, the research focused primarily on Indonesian

society; while the findings provide important context, they may not be universally applicable across Muslim communities. Future research could extend this study by conducting a broader cross-cultural comparison to examine how the fear of marriage manifests across sociocultural and religious contexts. Additionally, the study relies heavily on qualitative data, particularly literature and case studies, and further empirical research could include surveys or interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of young people's experiences and attitudes toward marriage. Finally, the role of digital media in shaping perceptions of marriage warrants further investigation, particularly regarding how digital platforms influence emotional readiness and relational expectations. Future studies could examine the long-term effects of social media content on marriage decisions and explore the effectiveness of digital interventions in promoting a healthy view of marriage.

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