

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE LOW INTEREST IN MARRIAGE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Khairul Ilham, Jamaluddin, Sumiati

Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara

Email: khairulilham2003@gmail.com, najwandua@gmail.com, sumideksisi@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis pandangan anak muda terhadap pernikahan dan faktor yang memengaruhi rendahnya minat menikah di Kecamatan Medan Johor. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian lapangan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi terhadap 12 informan berusia 19–25 tahun yang berdomisili di Kecamatan Medan Johor dan dipilih secara purposive. Data dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa informan pada umumnya memandang pernikahan secara positif sebagai ibadah, ikatan sakral, dan sarana membentuk keluarga harmonis. Namun, mereka menilai kesiapan lebih penting daripada usia dalam menentukan waktu menikah. Rendahnya minat menikah terutama dipengaruhi kondisi ekonomi yang belum stabil, biaya hidup, dan kekhawatiran memenuhi kebutuhan rumah tangga. Faktor lain meliputi kesiapan mental dan emosional, pendidikan, orientasi pekerjaan dan karier, pengalaman keluarga, lingkungan sosial, serta paparan media sosial mengenai konflik, perceraian, perselingkuhan, dan kekerasan rumah tangga. Temuan menegaskan bahwa penundaan pernikahan bukan merupakan penolakan terhadap institusi pernikahan, melainkan strategi anak muda untuk mencapai kesiapan multidimensional sebelum membangun rumah tangga. Kesiapan tersebut dipahami sebagai dasar penting bagi keberlanjutan kehidupan keluarga. Kesiapan tersebut dipahami sebagai dasar penting bagi keberlanjutan kehidupan

Kata kunci: Minat Menikah, Anak Muda, Kesiapan Menikah

Abstract

This study analyzes young people's views of marriage and the factors influencing low interest in marriage in Medan Johor District. It employed a qualitative field research approach. Data were obtained through interviews and documentation involving 12 informants aged 19–25 years who resided in Medan Johor District and were selected purposively. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that informants generally viewed marriage positively as worship, a sacred bond, and a means of establishing a harmonious family. Nevertheless, they considered readiness more important than age when determining the appropriate time to marry. Low interest in marriage was primarily influenced by unstable economic conditions, living costs, and concerns about meeting future household needs. Other factors included mental and emotional readiness, education, employment and career orientation, family experiences, social environment, and exposure to social media narratives concerning conflict, divorce, infidelity, and domestic violence. The findings confirm that postponing marriage does not represent rejection of marriage as an institution; rather, it reflects young people's strategy to attain multidimensional readiness before establishing a household. Such readiness

Keywords: Marriage Interest, Young People, Marriage Readiness

INTRODUCTION

Marriage remains a central religious and social institution in Indonesia, yet its timing is increasingly negotiated by young adults who are simultaneously completing education, entering employment, seeking financial independence, and developing long-term relationships. In Islamic family life, marriage carries moral and relational responsibilities rather than functioning merely as a change in legal status. For emerging adults, therefore, interest in marriage may coexist with caution about whether they possess sufficient emotional, economic, and social resources to establish a household. Research in Indonesia has shown that young adults can maintain positive attitudes and intentions toward marriage while also reporting substantial fear or doubt about entering it (Suryadi et al., 2023). This distinction is important because declining immediacy of marriage should not automatically be interpreted as rejection of marriage itself. Readiness has consequently become a key concept for explaining contemporary marriage decisions. Sari and Sunarti (2013) identified emotional, financial, social, role, age, spiritual, and communication dimensions as relevant to readiness, while Karunia and Rahaju (2018) showed that emerging adults evaluate marriage through multiple readiness criteria. More recent Indonesian evidence similarly indicates that people aged 20–24 may remain unready in financial, emotional, physical, intellectual, social, and planning dimensions even when other competencies are stronger (Murniati et al., 2024). Studies among university students also associate marital readiness with emotional intelligence and knowledge of family life (Ningrum et al., 2021), religiosity and social support (Ramdani et al., 2023), and emotional maturity (Davita, 2021; Al'azm & Fitniwilis, 2023). These findings support the proposition that age alone does not capture perceived preparedness for marriage. Economic and educational transitions further complicate marriage timing. Financial instability, employment uncertainty, household costs, and expectations of economic independence can make marriage appear desirable but premature. Indonesian discussions of delayed marriage among Generation Z emphasize financial unpreparedness and competing expectations surrounding wedding and family responsibilities (Bilqis, 2026; Waris et al., 2026). Earlier research on marriage timing also demonstrates that education, knowledge, cultural expectations, and peer environments shape marital decisions in different directions (Arikhman et al., 2019). Thus, postponement may reflect strategic sequencing: completing education, establishing work, achieving income stability, and only then entering marriage. Digital environments add another layer to this decision-making process. Generation Z encounters stories of divorce, infidelity, domestic violence, financial conflict, and relationship failure through social media alongside idealized portrayals of successful marriage. Indonesian studies report that online discussions can connect financial concerns and negative marital narratives with declining enthusiasm for marriage (Adhani & Aripudin, 2024; Fitria et al., 2024). Exposure to marital-conflict content has also been associated with attitudes toward marriage among early adults (Agatha & Pratiwi, 2025). Qualitative studies of the “Marriage is Scary” phenomenon describe fear as emerging from perceived marital risks, personal unpreparedness, social observation, and digital narratives (Tirta & Arifin, 2025; Layyinatussania et al., 2026; Karmila, 2026). Comparable evidence indicates that social media can shape marital beliefs during emerging

adulthood (Keldal & Kılıç, 2021), while algorithmic exposure may intensify negative marriage perceptions among Generation Z women (Firdaus, 2026). Despite this expanding literature, an important gap remains. Much existing work measures readiness, attitudes, or digital effects quantitatively, focuses on early marriage, or examines fear of marriage as a distinct psychological phenomenon. Less attention has been given to how unmarried young people in a specific urban district explain the coexistence of positive religious-social meanings of marriage and their reluctance to marry soon. Medan Johor provides a relevant local setting for examining this tension because young residents face educational, occupational, economic, familial, and digital influences simultaneously. The present study therefore aims to examine young people's views of marriage and identify the factors influencing their low interest in marrying in the near term. Its distinction lies in interpreting low interest not as a single negative attitude but as a locally situated configuration of economic readiness, psychological preparedness, educational and career priorities, family and peer experiences, and mediated information. By foregrounding participants' own accounts, the study contributes qualitative evidence to Islamic family-law and family-sociology discussions

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a field research design to understand young people's views of marriage and the factors underlying their low interest in marrying in Medan Johor District, Medan City. The research focused on unmarried young people living in the district. Informants were selected through purposive sampling according to the criteria established in the thesis, particularly age and residence. The study involved 12 informants aged 19–25 years who resided in Medan Johor. Purposive selection was appropriate because the research required participants who could provide information directly related to the phenomenon being investigated; this logic is consistent with the purposive sampling discussion presented by Lenaini (2021).

Data were collected through interviews and documentation. Interviews constituted the principal source for exploring informants' understandings of marriage, perceived readiness, economic circumstances, educational and career considerations, family and social experiences, and exposure to information concerning marriage. Documentation was used as supporting material for the field data. The study did not seek statistical generalization; instead, it aimed to obtain contextual explanations from participants who met the research criteria.

The data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. Interview material was examined systematically to identify meanings, recurring themes, and factors associated with low interest in marriage. The analytical process followed three stages stated in the thesis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Reduction involved selecting and focusing information relevant to the research questions; presentation organized the selected information so patterns across informants could be interpreted; and conclusion drawing synthesized those patterns into findings concerning perceptions of marriage and the factors influencing postponement. Data validity was addressed through the verification procedures described in the thesis, including triangulation, so that interpretations were checked against the available field information and

supporting documentation. Throughout the process, the analysis remained anchored in the statements and circumstances of the

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings reveal an apparent paradox: young people in Medan Johor generally value marriage, yet most do not regard it as an immediate priority. Informants described marriage as an important religious, social, and personal institution, commonly associating it with worship, a sacred bond, family formation, and the pursuit of a harmonious life. No dominant pattern of rejecting marriage as an institution emerged. Instead, participants distinguished between believing that marriage is valuable and believing that they are currently ready to undertake it. This distinction is important because declining or delayed marriage among young people can easily be interpreted as evidence of weakening family values. The findings suggest a more nuanced situation. Young people may retain positive normative beliefs about marriage while simultaneously postponing its realization because they consider themselves insufficiently prepared for its responsibilities. This pattern resembles findings among young adults in Greater Jakarta, where positive marital attitudes can coexist with fear and doubt (Suryadi et al., 2023), and it is consistent with the multidimensional understanding of readiness developed in Indonesian family studies (Sari & Sunarti, 2013; Karunia & Rahaju, 2018).

A central finding is that readiness was considered more important than reaching a particular age. Informants emphasized mental, emotional, and economic preparation before assuming marital responsibilities. Marriage was therefore perceived less as an event that should automatically occur at a socially expected age and more as a major life transition requiring adequate preparation. This suggests a shift from an age-oriented understanding of marriage toward a readiness-oriented one. Although age remains relevant, participants did not regard it as sufficient evidence that an individual should marry. Instead, readiness was evaluated through several interconnected dimensions, particularly financial capacity, emotional maturity, employment stability, partner suitability, and the ability to assume long-term responsibility. This orientation is supported by evidence that Indonesian youth aged 20–24 may remain insufficiently prepared across financial, emotional, intellectual, physical, and social dimensions (Murniati et al., 2024). It also corresponds with studies linking marital readiness to emotional intelligence and family-life knowledge (Ningrum et al., 2021), religiosity and social support (Ramdani et al., 2023), and emotional maturity (Davita, 2021; Al'azm & Fitniwilis, 2023). In the Medan Johor data, therefore, postponement is better interpreted as a readiness-based decision than as indifference toward family formation.

Economic and financial conditions emerged as the most dominant factor. Informants repeatedly referred to unstable income, uncertainty about employment, rising living costs, wedding expenses, housing needs, and the anticipated responsibility of supporting a household. Economic readiness was not treated merely as a preference for material comfort; it was connected to responsibility and fear of being unable to meet basic family obligations. Participants appeared to

understand marriage as creating new economic commitments whose consequences extend beyond the wedding ceremony itself. Their concerns involved everyday household expenditure, accommodation, future children, and the sustainability of family life. Consequently, financial insecurity could generate hesitation even when an individual personally desired marriage. This finding aligns with recent literature describing financial unpreparedness as a major driver of delayed marriage among Indonesian Generation Z (Bilqis, 2026; Waris et al., 2026). It also helps explain why positive attitudes toward marriage do not necessarily produce an intention to marry soon: the perceived consequences of inadequate finances can outweigh normative encouragement to marry. Thus, economic considerations function not simply as external obstacles but as part of young people's moral understanding of what it means to become a responsible spouse.

Education, employment, and career plans formed a second cluster of influential considerations. Several informants wanted to complete their studies, obtain stable employment, or establish a career before marriage. The sequence they envisioned placed personal preparation before household formation. This does not necessarily indicate individualism in opposition to family values. Rather, educational and occupational achievement was frequently understood as a resource for becoming a more responsible spouse. Education could improve employment opportunities, while stable employment could provide greater economic security for future family life. From this perspective, postponing marriage for education or career development may actually be oriented toward marriage rather than away from it. Earlier research shows that education and knowledge can influence marriage timing, while peer and cultural contexts also shape decisions (Arikhman et al., 2019). The present findings extend this discussion by showing how urban youth connect education and career preparation directly to perceived marital capability. Marriage planning is consequently embedded within a broader life-course strategy in which education, employment, financial independence, and family formation are sequenced according to perceived readiness.

Mental and emotional readiness was equally important in participants' narratives. Informants expressed concern about communication, compatibility, responsibility, emotional stability, and the capacity to manage conflict. They did not define readiness solely through employment or income. This is significant because it demonstrates that young people's hesitation cannot be reduced to economic calculation. Participants were also concerned with whether they could sustain a healthy relationship when confronted with disagreement, stress, changing responsibilities, and differences in personality. Marriage was perceived as requiring interpersonal competence rather than romantic attraction alone. The desired partner was also evaluated through shared life goals, character compatibility, responsibility, communication, and emotional maturity. Consequently, postponement sometimes reflected the difficulty of finding a partner considered appropriate rather than a lack of interest in marriage. This interpretation is compatible with the Marital Scales framework, which distinguishes intention, general attitudes, and evaluations of marital relationships (Park & Rosén, 2013). It also reinforces the finding that emotional maturity is meaningfully related to marriage readiness (Davita, 2021). The Medan Johor findings therefore

suggest that young people's standards for marriage include both self-readiness and partner-readiness.

Family and social environments influenced perceptions in more ambivalent ways. Positive family experiences could strengthen confidence in marriage, whereas exposure to conflict, separation, or difficult household relationships encouraged greater caution. Family therefore functioned simultaneously as a source of marital ideals and as a source of lessons about marital risks. Participants who observed supportive relationships could view marriage as a desirable source of companionship and stability, whereas difficult experiences could lead others to emphasize preparation and partner selection more strongly. Friends and wider social circles also shaped expectations about when marriage should occur and what preparation was necessary. These influences were not uniformly discouraging; rather, they supplied examples against which informants assessed their own readiness. This supports recent work emphasizing family support in marriage readiness (Muhtadin et al., 2026) and research showing that social environments can contribute to fear or hesitation about marriage among Generation Z (Karmila, 2026). The implication is that attitudes toward marriage are formed relationally rather than solely through individual preferences.

Social media and access to information constituted another meaningful factor. Informants encountered stories of divorce, infidelity, domestic violence, and family conflict, alongside positive portrayals of harmonious households. Negative stories made some participants more cautious and encouraged them to scrutinize partner choice and personal readiness. Importantly, exposure to such content did not automatically produce rejection of marriage. Instead, it often increased awareness of possible marital problems and strengthened the perceived need for preparation. Indonesian research similarly identifies financial concerns, divorce, violence, and infidelity in online Generation Z discussions about declining marriage rates (Adhani & Aripudin, 2024), while Fitria et al. (2024) connect social-media exposure to young people's marriage interest. Experimental or correlational evidence also suggests that exposure to marital-conflict content can influence attitudes toward marriage (Agatha & Pratiwi, 2025). Qualitative accounts of "Marriage is Scary" further show that digital narratives interact with personal and social experiences (Tirta & Arifin, 2025; Layyinatussania et al., 2026).

The role of social media should therefore be understood as part of a wider interpretive environment rather than as an independent determinant of delayed marriage. Young people do not merely receive online messages passively. They compare them with family experiences, peer discussions, personal relationships, religious expectations, and their own assessment of future risks. International evidence likewise associates social-media use with marital beliefs in emerging adulthood (Keldal & Kılıç, 2021), and recent Indonesian research highlights the role of algorithmically repeated negative marriage content (Firdaus, 2026). Repeated exposure may increase the visibility of marital failure and create an impression that conflict, betrayal, or divorce is widespread. Nevertheless, the Medan Johor findings suggest that digital exposure is filtered through existing concerns. A participant already worried about finances, compatibility, or

emotional readiness may interpret negative marital content as further justification for postponement. Social media thus appears to amplify rather than independently create many of the anxieties surrounding marriage.

Taken together, the findings indicate that low interest in marrying soon is produced by interacting considerations rather than one isolated cause. Economic insecurity is the strongest influence, but its meaning is reinforced by educational aspirations, career sequencing, emotional preparedness, family experiences, peer expectations, partner-selection criteria, and digital information. These factors operate cumulatively. Financial uncertainty can encourage a person to prioritize employment; employment priorities can postpone partner commitment; exposure to family conflict can raise expectations concerning emotional maturity; and social-media narratives can reinforce concerns about choosing the wrong partner. The decision to delay marriage is therefore best understood as the outcome of a multidimensional assessment of whether the individual and prospective partner possess sufficient resources to establish and maintain a stable household.

The contribution of this study lies in showing that positive valuation of marriage and delayed marriage intention are not contradictory. In this local context, postponement represents an effort to reconcile religious and social recognition of marriage with contemporary expectations of economic stability, educational achievement, emotional maturity, partner compatibility, and responsible family formation. Young people are not necessarily moving away from marriage; rather, they appear to be redefining the conditions under which marriage should occur. The relevant distinction is therefore not simply between wanting and not wanting to marry, but between valuing marriage as a future life goal and considering oneself ready to marry in the present. This distinction provides a more precise interpretation of changing marriage intentions among urban Indonesian youth. It also suggests that discussions of declining marriage interest should avoid treating postponement as synonymous with rejection. For many young people in Medan Johor, delaying marriage may instead constitute a deliberate strategy for reducing perceived marital risks and increasing the likelihood of establishing the harmonious, stable, and responsible family life that they continue to regard as desirable.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that young people in Medan Johor District generally retain positive views of marriage while showing limited interest in marrying in the near term. Marriage is understood as worship, a sacred bond, and a means of establishing a harmonious family, but readiness is considered more important than age. The strongest factor underlying postponement is economic and financial insecurity, particularly unstable income, living costs, and concern about meeting household responsibilities. Educational completion, employment and career preparation, mental and emotional maturity, family experiences, social influences, partner-selection considerations, and exposure to negative marital narratives on social media also shape decisions. These factors operate interactively rather than independently. Accordingly, low marriage interest in this setting should not be interpreted as rejection of marriage itself. It more accurately reflects

an effort to prepare for marriage across economic, psychological, educational, relational, and social dimensions. The study contributes a local qualitative perspective by explaining the coexistence of favorable marital values and delayed intention among urban youth. Its findings imply that family and marriage education should address practical readiness, emotional competence, responsible financial planning, critical engagement with digital information, and realistic expectations of marital roles while preserving the religious and social meaning that participants continue to

REFERENCES

- Adhani, A. F., & Aripudin, A. (2024). Perspektif Generasi Z di Platform X terhadap penurunan angka pernikahan di Indonesia. *J-KIs: Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, 5(1), 185–198. <https://doi.org/10.53429/j-kis.v5i1.1001>
- Agatha, G., & Pratiwi, I. (2025). Pengaruh paparan konten media sosial terkait konflik pernikahan terhadap attitude toward marriage pada dewasa awal. *Flourishing Journal*, 5(12), 709–724. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um070v5i122025p709-724>
- Al'azm, M. I., & Fitniwilis. (2023). Hubungan antara kematangan emosi dengan kesiapan menikah pada dewasa awal. *JHIP: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(12). <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v6i12.3114>
- Arikhman, N., Efendi, T. M., & Putri, G. E. (2019). Faktor yang mempengaruhi pernikahan usia dini di Desa Baru Kabupaten Kerinci. *Jurnal Endurance*, 4(3), 470–480. <https://doi.org/10.22216/jen.v4i3.4614>
- Bilqis, T. (2026). Systematic literature review: Intergenerational conflict in Generation Z's delayed marriage due to financial unpreparedness and parental expectations regarding large, traditional weddings based on custom and social status in Indonesia. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains*, 7(7). <https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v7i7.2402>
- Davita, J. R. (2021). Hubungan antara kematangan emosi dengan kesiapan menikah pada dewasa awal. *Character: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 8(7). <https://doi.org/10.26740/cjpp.v8i7.44194>
- Firdaus, D. R. S. (2026). Algorithmic exposure and gamophobia: A study of TikTok's 'Marriage is Scary' content among Generation Z women in Bogor City, Indonesia. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 34(4). <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.34.4.16>
- Fitria, R. N., Komariah, S., & Wulandari, P. (2024). Relasi media sosial dan minat menikah Generasi Z dalam perspektif pertukaran sosial. *Dimensia: Jurnal Kajian Sosiologi*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.21831/dimensia.v13i3.73813>
- Karmila, N. (2026). The phenomenon of fear of marriage among Generation Z in a sociological study. *Inovasi Pembangunan: Jurnal Kelitbangan*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.35450/jip.v14i1.1577>
- Karunia, N. E., & Rahaju, S. (2018). Marriage readiness of emerging adulthood. *GUIDENA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Psikologi, Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.24127/gdn.v8i2.1338>
- Keldal, G., & Kılıç, N. (2021). Investigating the associations between social media addiction, marital beliefs, and attitudes toward cohabitation during emerging adulthood. *Marriage & Family Review*, 57(8), 764–779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2021.1919813>

- Layyinatussania, I., Jayanti, A. D., Puspito, I. O., Devi, A. F., & Azizah, L. N. (2026). Fenomena 'Marriage is Scary': Ketakutan Generasi Z terhadap pernikahan di era digital. *Jurnal Psikologi Integratif*, 14(1), 15–33. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpsi.v14i1.3281>
- Lenaini, I. (2021). Teknik pengambilan sampel purposive dan snowball sampling. *Historis: Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Sejarah*, 6(1), 33–39. <https://doi.org/10.31764/historis.v6i1.4075>
- Muhtadin, S., Muthalib, A., Mas'ud, M., Yassir, M., & Sidiq, R. M. (2026). Integrating Islamic legal literacy and family support in shaping marriage readiness: A structural equation modeling approach. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga dan Konsumen*, 19(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2026.19.1.15>
- Murniati, C., Pujihasvuty, R., Nasution, S. L., Oktriyanto, & Amrullah, H. (2024). Marriage readiness of adolescents aged 20–24 in Indonesia. *Jurnal Biometrika dan Kependudukan*, 13(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jbk.v13i1.2024.1-11>
- Ningrum, D. N. F., Latifah, M., & Krisnatuti, D. (2021). Marital readiness: Exploring the key factors among university students. *HUMANITAS: Indonesian Psychological Journal*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.26555/humanitas.v18i1.17912>
- Park, S. S., & Rosén, L. A. (2013). The Marital Scales: Measurement of intent, attitudes, and aspects regarding marital relationships. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 54(4), 295–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2013.780491>
- Ramdani, N. S., Herawati, T., & Musthofa. (2023). The effect of religiosity and social support on marriage readiness in the young adult age group. *Journal of Child, Family, and Consumer Studies*, 2(3), 270–280. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jcfcs.2.3.270-280>
- Sari, F., & Sunarti, E. (2013). Kesiapan menikah pada dewasa muda dan pengaruhnya terhadap usia menikah. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga dan Konsumen*, 6(3), 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2013.6.3.143>
- Suryadi, D., Sari, M. P., & Michiko, R. (2023). The attitudes and intention of marriage among young adults in Greater Jakarta: A descriptive study. *International Journal of Application on Social Science and Humanities*, 1(4). <https://doi.org/10.24912/ijassh.v1i4.28961>
- Tirta, K. D., & Arifin, S. N. (2025). Studi fenomenologi: Marriage is scary pada Generasi Z. *TERAPUTIK: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 8(3), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.26539/teraputik.833675>
- Waris, A., Ishaq, & Faisol, M. (2026). Generation Z marriage delay drivers and Islamic law tensions. *Academia Open*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.11.2026.13995>