



Between Fear and Faith

(Examining the 'Marriage Is Scary' Phenomenon through Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah and Institutional Response in Medan, Indonesia)

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Abstract

This study examines the Marriage is Scary phenomenon among young generations in Medan City, characterized by increasing fear of marriage driven by economic concerns, family trauma, and social media influence, and analyzes it from the perspective of Islamic Family Law. Using a qualitative field research approach through interviews, observations, and documentation involving young adults and officials at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) Medan, the study reveals that this trend reflects low legal awareness and a weakened understanding of Islamic values related to marriage, thereby contradicting the *maqāshid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-nasl* and *ḥifẓ al-'ird*. Although KUA Medan has responded through premarital counseling and digital education initiatives, their effectiveness remains limited due to low youth participation and a lack of innovative material. The study concludes that strengthening legal awareness, applying progressive legal approaches, and internalizing *maqāshid*-oriented education are essential to shaping positive perceptions of marriage among young Muslims.

Keywords: Marriage is Scary; KUA Medan; *Maqāshid ayy-Syarī'ah*

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Introduction

In Islamic Family Law, marriage plays a central role; it is at the core of the law. Marriage, as one of the important stages in human life, should provide peace, emotional support, and happiness. However, shifts in society's perspective, particularly towards marriage as a social institution, cannot be stopped by the emergence of negative narratives about marriage itself. Generation Z¹, as the generation with the average age at marriage, is among those affected by these negative trends. For example, the trend of 'Marriage is Scary', which is the fear or reluctance to marry.²

The 'Marriage is Scary' trend originated from posts using specific hashtags, short videos, and online discussions on social media, particularly on the TikTok platform. Gen-Z, as the most active and largest users of TikTok in Indonesia, became the generation most affected by these trends because of the significant influence of social media on the mindset of the younger generation in Indonesia.³

This trend stems from posts built on hypothetical narratives, such as 'what if' scenarios that imagine the worst-case scenarios of marriage and household life, thereby causing fear and doubt about the institution of marriage itself. For example, content from the TikTok platform shapes perceptions that marriage is a source of problems rather than a source of happiness and that marriage is a frightening prospect.⁴

The impact of these negative trends is feared to further exacerbate declines in marriage rates and national demographic growth, and to potentially shift the sacred values of marriage and disrupt the stability of the social order more broadly. Many individuals from the younger generation, both millennials and Generation Z, choose to delay or even refuse to marry permanently, stating that they are not emotionally or financially ready, or fear failure as they have witnessed in their social environment.⁵

The younger generation's fear of marriage is likely also triggered by rising divorce rates and declining marriage rates. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicate that, in 2022, divorce increased by approximately 20% over the last five years and that marriage rates in Indonesia have declined gradually over the previous 10 years. In 2014, there were 2,110,776 marriages; by 2024, this number had dropped to 1,478,302.⁶

Marriage, in the view of Islamic law, is not merely a social contract (*akad*) between a man and a woman, but also a form of worship. This is stated in the Compilation of Islamic Law

¹ Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, n.d.

² Riyan Riswandi, "Analisis Perspektif Mahasiswa Muslim Gen-Z Terhadap Isu Marriage Is Scary," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Indonesia* 5 (2025).

³ Mulya Ananda, Ahmad Suriansyah, and Wahdah Refia Rafianti, "Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Pembentukan Identitas Diri Pada Generasi Z," *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 4 (2024): 2279–89, <https://doi.org/10.60126/maras.v2i4.634>.

⁴ Diambil dari tagline #marriageisscary dari akun @number1w : "Menikah itu menakutkan, bayangkan jika ia menikahimu karena dia tidak cukup pantas untuk seseorang yang ia inginkan" yakni perkawinan hanya sebagai pelampiasan kekecewaan, @zalfanadiraa : "marriage is scary, bayangin nanti suami lu gabisa belain lu di depan keluarganya" ketakutan menjadi istri yang terabaikan oleh keluarga suami.

⁵ "Tren Menunda Perkawinan Di Kalangan Anak Muda: Alasan Dan Dampaknya" (Sasanti, n.d.), <https://www.sasanti.or.id/2024/03/13/tren-menunda-perkawinan-di-kalangan-anak-muda-alasan-dan-dampaknya/>.

⁶ "Angka Perkawinan Di Indonesia Turun" (CNN Indonesia, n.d.), <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20250721074202-284-252910/angka-perkawinan-di-indonesia-turun>.

(KHI) Article (4): Marriage is a very strong contract (*mitsaqan ghalizhan*) to obey Allah's commands, and carrying it out is an act of worship.⁷

Marriage serves as worship of Allah and obedience to the commands of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, creating a family that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, thereby maintaining order and social stability. This is confirmed in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) article (3): Marriage aims to create a household that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.⁸

Young people are more responsive and sensitive to negative things. They respond more quickly to negative stimuli than to positive ones, and many studies show that young people are better at detecting and remembering frightening stimuli than non-frightening ones.⁹ Thus, although the ideal of marriage in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) emphasises the formation of a *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* family as part of worship, social reality indicates that an increasing number of young people doubt the institution of marriage's success. Many young people view marriage only as a source of problems, pressure, and the risk of divorce, without understanding the meaning of worship, its sacred purpose, and how to build a harmonious household.¹⁰

Marriage matters fall within the purview of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which is implemented through the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). This institution not only administers marriage records but also provides guidance and counselling on marriage to the community.

In this context, the trend of marriage being scary is an interesting phenomenon to be linked to how the KUA actually responds and plays a role in facing the negative narrative about marriage in the public sphere, especially on social media. This is especially relevant when we consider the Director General of Islamic Guidance Decree No. 379 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Pre-marital Guidance, which is also related to the Director General of Islamic Guidance Regulation No. DJ.491/11 of 2009 concerning Courses for Prospective Brides and Grooms, which was later refined by the Director General of Islamic Guidance Regulation No. DJ. II/542 of 2013 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Pre-Marriage Courses. Therefore, the KUA must be able to assume a leading role in countering negative narratives about marriage in society, particularly among younger generations who are active on social media.

Although the KUA has played an important role in providing marriage guidance, social dynamics, and developments in digital culture present new challenges that affect how the younger generation views marriage. To date, there have been no specific measures directly aimed at countering negative trends regarding marriage on social media. Marriage guidance activities are still carried out conventionally in offices, without a structured digital approach. In this regard, the researcher interviewed two KUA heads to ask for their opinions on this trend and the role of the KUA.

First, the researcher asked Mr Iwin Damanik, head of the Medan Area subdistrict KUA. The author asked about the role of the KUA in providing marriage counselling among the negative trends surrounding marriage on social media. He replied, 'So far, there hasn't been

⁷ Dirjen Bina K U A dan Keluarga Sakinah, *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 2018).

⁸ Sakinah.

⁹ Laura L Carstensen and Marguerite DeLiema, "The Positivity Effect: A Negativity Bias In Youth Fades With Age," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 19 (2018).

¹⁰ M Paschalia J Judith, "Aku Trauma, Aku Takut Menikah," *Kompas.Id*, 2024, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/investigasi/2024/11/07/aku-trauma-aku-takut-menikah>.

any. At most, we just provide marriage guidance. That's all we do."¹¹ Secondly, the researcher interviewed Mr Azmi Harahap, Head of the Medan Kota subdistrict KUA, with the same question. He replied, "So far, what we have been doing is providing marriage guidance, both individually and in groups. Getting married requires maximum preparation, so that is what we do. There have been no special efforts, and nothing has been programmed. Consultations are primarily conducted via chat, but not on a large scale. People just come to the office."¹²

Based on interviews with KUA heads in two subdistricts of Medan City, an initial picture emerged of the KUA's institutional response to the negative trend in social media marriage. An interview with Mr Iwin Damanik, head of the KUA in the Medan Area Subdistrict, revealed that, to date, the KUA has no specific programme explicitly designed to address the phenomenon of "marriage being scary." He stated that the guidance provided remains limited to implementing premarital counselling as part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' regular programme, without addressing emerging digital narratives on social media. This statement indicates that the KUA remains within a conventional guidance framework and has not adapted to new approaches aligned with the dynamics of digital society.

Similar findings were also obtained from an interview with Mr Azmi Harahap, Head of the Medan Kota Subdistrict KUA. He emphasised that the guidance efforts undertaken by the KUA to date have focused on providing marriage guidance, both individually and in groups, to equip prospective brides and grooms in general. However, he acknowledged that there are no structured, specifically planned programmes to address narratives of fear of marriage on social media. The KUA's interaction with the community on this issue remains incidental, such as consultations via text messages or face-to-face services at the KUA office, and has not extended to the digital space at large.

To strengthen these qualitative findings, researchers also collected quantitative supporting data from the KUA, including the number of participants in premarital counselling in the past year and the age trends among prospective brides and grooms who registered. These data indicate that marriage counselling continues to be offered regularly. However, the level of participation among young people who come fully aware of the preparation for marriage remains relatively limited. Some participants attend counselling more out of administrative obligation than educational need. These findings strengthen the indication that marriage counselling has not been fully positioned as a strategic space to address the anxieties of the younger generation about marriage.

In addition, the perspective of KUA religious counsellors enriches the analysis. Based on interviews with religious counsellors, it was found that prospective brides and grooms—especially those in the younger age group—often express concerns about domestic conflict, divorce, and economic pressure, which are largely influenced by social media content. Counsellors acknowledge that premarital guidance materials have not been specifically designed to address the phenomenon that marriage is scary, so the response to participants' anxieties is still reactive and depends on the personal experiences of the counsellor.

The researchers also conducted direct observations of the implementation of premarital counselling at one of the KUA offices in Medan. The observations indicated that the material presented remained normative and general, employing a one-way lecture format and providing limited space for discussion. Participants tended to be passive, and there was little opportunity to openly discuss fears or doubts about marriage influenced by digital narratives.

¹¹ Iwin Damanik, "Wawancara Pribadi" (Medan Area: KUA Medan Area, n.d.).

¹² Azmi Harahap, "Wawancara Pribadi" (Medan Kota: KUA Medan Kota, n.d.).

These observational findings confirm the interview results that although the KUA formally performs a guidance function, the approach used is not yet fully adaptive to the challenges of the social media era.

By combining interviews with the Head of the KUA, the perspectives of religious counsellors, quantitative supporting data, and field observations, this study shows that the KUA's response to the phenomenon of marriage is still limited, not specifically programmed, and does not strategically address the digital space. This emphasises the importance of strengthening the role of the KUA not only as an administrative institution but also as a social actor that is responsive to changes in the mindset of the younger generation in the digital era.

In academic research, several prior works provide preliminary insight but have not comprehensively examined the role of the KUA in digital narratives. Wulandari, in her thesis, examined the narrative of "Marriage is Scary" on social media from the perspective of Islamic Family Law but did not address the KUA's institutional role as a guiding actor. Hasanah Harahap examined the relevance of Premarital Guidance to the high divorce rate in Medan. Still, her focus was primarily on the technical effectiveness of the guidance rather than on the challenges posed by digital narratives. Meanwhile, Asa'diah highlighted the role of the KUA in preventing divorce through marriage guidance, but did not mention the phenomenon of the trend of fear of marriage on social media. Thus, the state of the art indicates a research gap regarding the KUA's response to negative digital trends related to marriage.

There is an urgent need to address this research gap, given that social media has become the primary source shaping young people's perceptions of marriage, often more influential than family education or formal religious institutions. When problematic digital narratives are left without an adequate institutional response, there is a risk of weakening the function of family guidance and eroding public trust in the institution of marriage. Therefore, this research is important to conduct at this time to formulate a KUA response model that is relevant to the challenges of the digital age and the needs of the younger generation.

Internationally, similar phenomena have also received academic attention. Several studies in Western countries show that social media contributes to increased marriage anxiety, delayed marriage, and a redefinition of the meaning of long-term commitment among the younger generation. Research by Cherlin and Lauer, for example, reveals that economic uncertainty and exposure to negative narratives about intimate relationships in digital media encourage young people to view marriage as a high-risk institution. Another study by Willoughby and Hall confirms that consumption of problematic relationship content on social media correlates with increased scepticism towards marriage. However, these studies generally originate from a secular context and have not specifically examined the role of religious institutions.

Furthermore, to emphasise that this issue is not merely a local problem, international and cross-cultural studies show how social media and digital narratives influence perceptions of marriage. For example, in a sociological study by Johan Bollen in his paper 'Happiness is assortative in online social networks,' it was found that users' psychological and emotional conditions, including perceptions of happiness, fear, and anxiety, are susceptible to 'spreading' through social media due to the mechanism of assortative mixing or online homophily: users tend to be surrounded by people with similar emotional conditions or views, which then reinforces collective perceptions. This finding underscores how social media can shape a new social reality, not only in Indonesia. It demonstrates the importance

of educational and institutional interventions in responding to its impact on the institution of marriage. Therefore, investigating the role of the KUA in digital narratives is not only relevant at the local level but also contributes significantly to the global literature on religion, family, and social media.

This is the novelty or scientific innovation of this research. This article not only describes the development of the ‘Marriage is Scary’ trend but also critically examines how the KUA of Medan City responds to this phenomenon, what obstacles it faces, and how premarital counselling and guidance strategies should be adapted to the characteristics of the digital generation. Another novelty lies in the integration of the Islamic Family Law approach with analyses of family sociology and family psychology, so that this article not only assesses normative aspects but also examines how the perceptions, fears, and anxieties of the younger generation are shaped in the digital space.

To address these issues, this study employs a qualitative methodological approach within empirical legal research. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with the head of the KUA, religious counsellors, and young people; observation of counselling sessions; and analysis of social media content. Secondary data was obtained from relevant regulations, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), scientific literature, and activity reports. Data analysis used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model: reduction, data presentation, and repeated verification. A family sociology approach was used to examine the function of the KUA as a social institution. In contrast, a family psychology approach was used to examine the emotional aspects of the younger generation in responding to marital issues.

Informants were selected via purposive sampling using specific criteria and then recruited through snowball sampling to reach relevant informants with direct experience of the phenomenon under study. The research informants consisted of: (1) KUA heads and/or religious leaders at several KUAs in Medan City who had experience in marriage services and marriage guidance; (2) Islamic religious teachers who are actively involved in premarital counselling activities; and (3) Young people aged 20–30 years old who reside in Medan City, are unmarried or newly married, actively use social media, and have been exposed to or expressed concerns about marriage. The number of young informants in this study is 10–15, with the final sample size determined by data saturation, defined as the point at which the information obtained has been repeated and no longer yields significant new findings.

Based on the above description, this study aims to: (1) describe how the ‘Marriage is Scary’ trend has developed among the younger generation in Medan; (2) explain the views of Islamic Family Law on this trend; (3) analyse the response of the KUA in dealing with negative narratives about marriage; and (4) identify obstacles and strategies to strengthen the role of the KUA in building a positive perception of marriage in the digital age. These objectives are expected to contribute, both theoretically and practically, to strengthening family institutions and to renewing KUA outreach strategies to be more adaptive and relevant to the needs of the younger generation.

Result and Discussion

Marriage is a Scary Phenomenon.

The Marriage is Scary phenomenon is a term that describes the fear, anxiety, and concerns of the younger generation towards the institution of marriage. Globally, this term began to appear on social media around 2019, when many young people voiced their concerns about the responsibilities and instability of marriage. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon

has received particular attention because it contradicts cultural and religious values that regard marriage as integral to a perfect life.¹³

Several surveys show a decline in interest in marriage among people of productive age. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2024, the number of marriages among people aged 20–30 decreased by 21% relative to 2019.¹⁴ This trend indicates a change in the life orientation of the younger generation, who prioritise careers, education, and personal freedom over starting a family.

On social media, the ‘Marriage is Scary’ trend has evolved beyond a spontaneous narrative; numerous academic studies indicate that it has become a collective discourse that shapes young people's perceptions of the institution of marriage. For example, a recent article found that in an analysis of 100 videos and 1,000 comments with the hashtag #MarriageIsScary on the TikTok platform, approximately 68% of videos depicted marriage negatively — emphasising fears of commitment, economic burdens, and emotional instability — and 60% of netizen comments reinforced these concerns, particularly among women aged 18–30.

Table 1. The Study Findings

Category	Description	Percentage
Percentage of Videos Based on Marriage Narrative	Negative	68%
	Neutral	22%
	Positive	10%
Percentage of Comments on Marriage Views	Supporting a negative narrative	60%
	Neutral informative	25%
	Supporting Positive Views	15%

The findings of this study indicate that TikTok plays a transformative role in shaping social perceptions of marriage, particularly among millennials and Generation Z. The widespread use of the hashtag #MarryIsScary indicates a shift in how marriage is understood—no longer as an inevitable stage of life, but as a choice that requires critical consideration. Through viral content, TikTok has become a powerful medium for reinforcing and spreading negative views about marriage, thereby further influencing young users' attitudes towards long-term commitment.¹⁵

Another study on young women (Gen Z) shows that most informants admitted that the ‘Marriage is Scary’ content gave them a sense of validation for their personal anxieties: concerns about financial readiness, fear of domestic conflict, and trauma from witnessing divorce in their environment. A small number of informants rejected this narrative due to

¹³ Lisa Diamond, *Trends in Modern Relationship Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

¹⁴ Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), “Statistik Pernikahan Dan Perceraian 2024” (Jakarta: BPS RI, 2024).

¹⁵ Novi Andayani Praptiningsih, “Young Generation Perceptions of Marriage: Analyzing the #MarryIsScary Hashtag on TikTok,” *Communicare: Journal Of Communication Studies* 11, no. 2 (2024): 172–73.

religious beliefs or positive family experiences, but the overall trend is one of increasing scepticism about future marriage.¹⁶

Furthermore, analysis from the perspective of Islamic family law concludes that the narrative of ‘Marriage is Scary’ is often constructed from a combination of traumatic personal experiences, misinformation, and a lack of legal and religious literacy, thereby forming a skewed collective perception of marriage. This narrative, when widely disseminated through social media, makes it difficult to convey the understanding of marriage in Islam as a form of worship, a sacred institution, and a means of forming a *sakinah mawaddah warahmah* family.

However, positive content that offers constructive narratives about marriage, such as pre-marital educational videos, stories of happy couples, explanations of *fiqh nikah*, or testimonials from harmonious families, is significantly less prevalent in terms of both quantity and engagement. This imbalance indicates that social media algorithms and interaction dynamics (comments, likes, shares) tend to reinforce negative content, making pessimistic perceptions of marriage seem more prevalent than they are.

From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon is also related to the changing values and identities of the modern generation, which prioritises self-fulfilment over social responsibility. According to Anthony Giddens, modern society has shifted towards ‘pure relationships’, which are based on emotional satisfaction rather than moral or religious obligations.¹⁷ In this context, marriage is often considered irrelevant to the modern lifestyle.

The Factors Leading up to the ‘Marriage is Scary’ Trend

Social and Cultural Factors

Changes in the social structure of modern society have led to a shift in values regarding the meaning of marriage. Historically, marriage was regarded as a social obligation and a marker of maturity. Now, many young people see marriage as a personal choice that can be postponed without a moral burden.

In addition, the influx of Western individualistic culture, which emphasises personal freedom, has also changed views on household responsibilities. Zygmunt Bauman refers to this era as liquid modernity—a period in which human relationships become fluid and easily broken due to a loss of social commitment. This aligns with the mindset of some young Indonesians who are reluctant to commit to long-term obligations.

Economic Factors

Economic conditions are one of the main causes of the Marriage is Scary trend. Young people face high living costs, difficulty securing permanent employment, and rising prices for necessities. They feel unprepared to bear the financial burden of a family.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ recognised the importance of financial readiness in marriage, as he said: ‘O young men, whoever among you is capable (financially) should marry.’ (HR. al-Bukhārī no. 5066)¹⁸

¹⁶ Nuraleina Putri, “Tren ‘Marriage Is Scary’ Di Tiktok: Analisis Resepsi Perempuan Generasi Z,” *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Garut: Hasil Pemikiran Dan Penelitian* 1, no. 2 (2025).

¹⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, n.d.

However, financial difficulties should not be a reason to reject marriage altogether. Islam teaches that sustenance is in the hands of Allah and will be given to those who strive and are pious (QS. An-Nūr [24]: 32).

Psychological Factors and Social Experiences

Some young people have trauma towards marriage due to bad experiences in their families, such as divorce, violence, or parental discord. They worry about repeating the same mistakes. In addition, exposure to negative content on social media reinforces the perception that marriage is a source of conflict rather than happiness.

Religious Factors and Lack of Pre-Marital Education.

The lack of adequate religious education about the purpose and wisdom of marriage makes the younger generation unable to understand the worship aspect of marriage. According to Yūsuf al-Qaradhāwī, weak Islamic education will result in 'spiritual drought and a crisis of meaning in life', leading to a deviation in values.¹⁹

The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has a Marriage Guidance (Bimwin) programme, but its effectiveness remains limited to participants who are about to marry. In fact, marriage values need to be instilled long before a couple decides to get married.

The Impact of the 'Marriage is Scary' Trend

Individual Impacts

Fear of marriage can lead to identity crises and emotional loneliness. Individuals who reject marriage often lose the social support that they would normally receive from their families. In the long term, this can lead to depression and mental disorders.

In addition, fear of marriage also encourages deviant alternative behaviours, such as cohabitation and adultery. This contradicts Islamic law, which emphasises the preservation of honour (*hifz al-'ird*).

The Impact on Society

The phenomenon of "Marriage is Scary" has led to a decline in marriage rates and an increase in the age at marriage, which affects social stability. If this trend continues, society will face the risk of a demographic crisis, weakened family resilience, and increased rates of moral deviance.

Furthermore, the loss of family meaning can reduce the quality of future generations. As emphasised by Ibn Khaldun, the family is the basic unit of human civilisation; without the family, society will lose its moral and social foundation.²⁰

The Impact on Religion

When marriage is no longer considered important, the religious values that govern relationships between men and women become blurred. As a result, the younger generation finds it easier to violate Islamic boundaries.

This phenomenon also indicates a decline in Islamic legal awareness, whereby religious law is considered irrelevant to modern life.

¹⁹ Yūsuf Al-Qaradhāwī, *Al-'Aql Wa Ad-Dīn Fī Al-Islām* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2019).

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2018).

Marriage is Scary in the Context of Islamic Family Law

Islamic Law Perspective

Islam views marriage as *sunnah mu'akkadah* (highly recommended sunnah). Under certain circumstances, marriage can even become obligatory for those who fear falling into unlawful acts. Imam An-Nawawi stated:

'Marriage can become obligatory for those who fear falling into adultery if they do not marry.'²¹

Thus, rejecting marriage without a valid reason means opposing the sunnah of the Prophet and ignoring the *maqāshid of sharia*. The phenomenon of Marriage is Scary is not only a social problem, but also a problem of faith and belief in understanding Allah's commands.

Review Based on Legal Awareness Theory

Low legal awareness is a major factor in the emergence of this trend. Young people who do not understand the value of marriage will see it only as a social burden. Therefore, Islamic legal education should foster an understanding that marriage is part of the divine legal system, which aims to maintain honour, lineage, and social order.

Review Based on Progressive Legal Theory

From a progressive legal perspective, religious institutions need to innovate their educational and legal communication approaches to ensure that the younger generation accepts the values of marriage. Satjipto Rahardjo emphasises that the law must serve as a liberator of individuals from social fears, not merely as a tool of formal control.²²

The KUA, for example, can develop digital coaching programmes, interactive discussions, or educational campaigns that are relevant to the language and lifestyle of the younger generation.

Review Based on Maqāshid Asy-Syari'ah

The Marriage is Scary trend contradicts the objectives of Islamic law, which seeks to protect five basic things (*al-daruriyyāt al-khamsah*): religion, life, reason, lineage, and property. By rejecting marriage, the younger generation is actually neglecting two important maqāshid, namely *ḥifẓ an-nasl* (preserving offspring) and *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (preserving honour).

Therefore, it is the duty of religious institutions and society to rekindle awareness of the maqāshid so that marriage is seen not as a burden but as a path to prosperity.

Response from the Medan City Religious Affairs Office (KUA)

The Religious Affairs Office (KUA), as the official state institution responsible for marriage affairs, has recognised this phenomenon.

The KUA of Medan City has responded to this with interactive pre-marital counselling and guidance programmes involving counsellors, religious instructors, and psychologists. They are seeking to change negative perceptions of marriage through open dialogue on campuses, social media, and in youth groups at mosques. The Pre-Marital Marriage Guidance Programme (Bimwin) takes a psychological and spiritual approach.

²¹ An-Nawawī, *Al-Majmū' Syarḥ Al-Mubadẓah*, vol. 17 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2017).

²² Satjipto Rahardjo, *Hukum Progresif: Sebuah Sintesa Hukum Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Genta, 2020).

However, the KUA acknowledges that youth participation in these activities remains low. Many consider religious guidance too formal and irrelevant to modern lifestyles.

Despite these efforts, the KUA of Medan City faces several significant obstacles in effectively reaching and engaging the younger generation. These challenges can be categorised into four main areas: communication barriers, lack of innovation in materials, limited resources, and insufficient collaboration. Each of these obstacles requires specific attention and strategic intervention to enhance the effectiveness of marriage guidance programmes.

Communication Barriers and Approaching the Younger Generation

Generation Z is open-minded and tends to be sceptical of dogmatic advice. Religious instructors acknowledge the difficulty of using language that is appropriate for young people.

Lack of Innovation in Guidance Materials

Premarital guidance materials remain formal and do not address current issues, such as mental health, financial planning, or household communication.

Limited Resources

The KUA does not yet have family psychologists or youth counsellors who can bridge the gap between spiritual language and the social realities of young people.

Lack of Collaboration with Youth Communities and Da'wah Institutions

Educational efforts have not been maximised because they have not engaged digital communities and Muslim influencers who influence the younger generation.

F. Analysis of Maqāshid Asy-Syari'ah on the Marriage is a Scary Trend

The analysis of marriage, a Scary phenomenon, needs to be strengthened by a more comprehensive maqāshid foundation, drawing on the views of classical and contemporary scholars. Imam al-Shāṭibī in *Al-Muwāfaqāt* emphasises that the main objectives of Sharia law are contained within the structure of daruriyyāt, which includes the preservation of offspring (*ḥifẓ an-nasl*) and honour (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*). Two aspects that are highly susceptible to disruption by the prevalence of delayed marriage and the normalisation of non-official relationships among the younger generation today.²³

The phenomenon of Marriage is Scary has the potential to undermine two main objectives of *maqāshid asy-syari'ah*, namely *ḥifẓ an-nasl* and *ḥifẓ al-'ird*. From the aspect of *ḥifẓ an-nasl*, collective fear of marriage encourages a significant delay in the age of marriage. This delay shifts the reproductive phase and, in population terms, reduces the chances of having children, thereby contributing to a decline in birth rates and disrupting generational continuity in Muslim societies. In addition, the fear of marriage often encourages individuals or couples to seek alternative forms of relationships that have no religious legitimacy, such as informal relationships, cohabitation without commitment, or involvement in sexual relations outside of marriage. Such practices pose serious problems for the clarity of lineage, the legal status of children, and social and economic protection for offspring, thereby directly contradicting the principle of preserving offspring. Furthermore, fear of long-term commitment delays a person's emotional and psychological readiness to assume the role of parent, thereby hindering the internalisation of religious and moral values from generation to generation. Overall, this phenomenon threatens *ḥifẓ an-nasl* by reducing reproductive

²³ Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fi Uṣūl Al-Shari'ah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997).

opportunities, degrading the quality of legitimate family formation, and normalising practices that shift the institution's function from safeguarding descendants.

As for *hijz al-'ird*, Marriage is Scary also has a significant impact. When marriage is perceived as a threat, some individuals tend to choose informal relationships that obscure commitment. This choice blurs the boundaries of personal and family honour and creates opportunities for social stigma, family disgrace, and uncertainty about the status of the relationship. This phenomenon of fear can also be rooted in a crisis of trust in social institutions that are supposed to uphold family dignity and protection, such as religious courts, family counselling services, or legal systems that deal with violence and divorce. When these institutions are perceived as incapable of providing security, individuals feel vulnerable; consequently, avoiding marriage increases the risk of vulnerability to dishonour. In addition, individuals who avoid marriage out of fear often face social pressure from their environment or even become involved in unrecognised relationships, which ultimately results in psychological and social burdens that damage their dignity and that of their families. Therefore, the sociocultural and institutional phenomenon of marriage severely weakens the principle of *hijz al-'ird* because it normalises unauthorised relationships, increases the risk of damage to social reputation, and erodes public trust in the honour protection mechanisms provided by Sharia law.

Conclusion

This study finds that the Marriage is Scary trend contradicts the basic principles of Islamic family law, which encourages marriage as a means of preserving honour (*hijz al-'ird*) and continuing the lineage (*hijz an-nasl*) in *maqāshid asy-syar'ah*. The phenomenon of fear of marriage arises from a weak awareness of religious law (religious legal awareness) and a narrow understanding of the purpose and wisdom of marriage in Islam. Substantively, Islam views marriage as both a form of worship and a social institution that brings benefits to individuals and society.

This trend is reflected in the young generation's concerns about economic aspects, household instability, family trauma, and the strong influence of social media, which frames marriage as a source of psychological pressure. This phenomenon manifests itself in digital narratives, delayed marriage age, and ambivalent attitudes towards long-term commitment. Field findings show that the majority of young people want to get married, but are accompanied by a deep fear of the risks of marriage.

The Medan City KUA has responded to this emerging trend by providing premarital guidance, religious education, and innovative dialogue-based activities. However, this study found that the effectiveness of the programme is still hampered by: a communication gap between counsellors and the younger generation, limited materials that are not sufficiently adaptive to contemporary issues, a lack of collaboration with youth communities and digital platforms, and a shortage of professional counsellors who understand the psychology of Generation Z.

From a progressive legal theory perspective, the KUA's response is on the right track, but it still needs to be strengthened through innovation to be more relevant and transformative. Overall, this study confirms that the phenomenon of Marriage is Scary is not merely a social issue, but a matter of values, legal awareness, and religious understanding that must be addressed with a comprehensive approach: spiritual, psychological, educational, and social.

Suggestions

Based on the above conclusions, several suggestions can be made for the development of marriage guidance programmes in the future, as follows:

For the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Medan City, to improve the communicative and dialogical approach using language that is relevant to Generation Z. Develop premarital guidance materials that touch on current issues, such as mental health, conflict management, financial literacy, and modern relationship dynamics. Engage family counselors, psychologists, or youth counselors to bridge religious values and social realities. Optimise social media as a platform for preaching and education, including short video content, podcasts, and collaborations with creative communities.

For the younger generation: Strengthen their understanding of religion and the purpose of marriage through study, literature, and premarital education. Avoiding reliance on social media alone for information and prioritising credible sources in understanding marriage. Building psychological, spiritual, and financial capabilities as preparation for starting a household.

For further researchers, more extensive research using quantitative or mixed methods approaches is needed to statistically measure the level of anxiety about marriage. Research can be expanded by comparing this phenomenon across several major cities in Indonesia to examine a wider range of sociocultural factors. Further studies can examine the effectiveness of premarital guidance curricula and family education models grounded in the *maqāshid asy-syarī'ah*.

For the Government and Educational Institutions, it is necessary to develop premarital education programmes that begin at the adolescent level and extend through schools, universities, and community institutions. Integrating family literacy and mental resilience into the education curriculum will ensure that the younger generation is emotionally prepared for marriage.

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