

Gen Z's Perception of Marriage and the Reasons Behind It Waithood Case Study: Subdistrict Hero, District North Binjai, Binjai City

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Gene Z, Wedding , Waithood .</p>	<p>Study This aim For explore meaning marriage and reasons postpone wedding according to Generation Z in Heroes Subdistrict North Binjai . Generation Z born in 1997 – 2012. Focus main study This is For understand view Generation Z against marriage and Through interview deep , found that Generation Z views wedding as matter Which very important However No A little from they still postpone wedding Because a number of factors . Research This aim For identify perception Gene Z to institutions wedding And dig factors Which background decision For postpone wedding among them factor economic factors education and factors social . With approach qualitative descriptive study This involving interview deep to respondents aged 20-28 years who live in the sub-district hero subdistrict Binjai north . Research results show that part big respondents own view critical to marriage . They No Again look at wedding as objective main in life , but as something choice Which nature personal and contextual . The main reasons put forward For postpone wedding covers concern will stability economy , education and career that you want achieved , as well as expectation high social in wedding .</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Islam is not simply a bond between two individuals, but rather an institution encompassing religious, moral, and social values (Malikadharsyah , 2024). From a ushul and linguistic perspective, the word " *nikah* " has two meanings: sexual intercourse and a contract. If the word " *nikah* " appears in the Qur'an or the Prophet's hadith without specific indications, then its meaning refers to a biological relationship (Muzammil, 2019).

Marriage is also the sunnah of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wa greetings and a form of grace from Allah Subhānahu wa God created humans into pairs. In the Qur'an , Allah encourages His people to marry, as stated in Surah An- Nur, verse 32:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِن يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"And marry those who are still single among you, and also those who are worthy (to marry) of your servants, both male and female. If they are poor, Allah will give them ability with His grace. And Allah is All-Encompassing (His gifts) and All-Knowing." (QS. An- Nur : 32)

This verse shows that marriage is an act of worship commanded by Allah, even for those with limited financial means. Allah promises sufficiency for anyone who strives for good deeds, such as marriage (Azizah Nur Husna, 2024). Marriage is obligatory for those who are physically and mentally capable and who are concerned about falling into adultery. In Arabic, "ability" is called *ahlun*, meaning worthy and appropriate. Scholars interpret it as a person's readiness to accept rights and fulfill obligations according to sharia (Umasangadji, 2023).

Although the Qur'an and Hadith do not explicitly mention the age limit for marriage, in Islamic jurisprudence The munakahat explains that the conditions for a valid marriage are puberty, sanity, health, and the ability to distinguish between good and bad deeds. From a health perspective, the ideal age for marriage is 20–25 years for women and 25–30 years for men (Dewinta Asokawati, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Law No. 16 of 2019, Article 1, as a revision of Law No. 1 of 1974, it is explained that:

"Marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family (household) based on the One Almighty God." (Law No. 16 of 2019)

Marriage is a crucial stage in a person's life, marking the transition from singlehood to family life. However, in recent years, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z), the trend of delaying marriage has become increasingly apparent. This phenomenon is known as *waithood*, a longer transition period into adulthood before deciding to marry.

In Indonesia, despite the majority of the population being Muslim, the *waithood phenomenon* continues to thrive. It is even predicted to increase until 2050, with the average marriage age of Gen Z being older than previous generations (Syarifuddin Zuhdi, 2024). Gen Z is known as the digital generation, or *iGeneration*, whose lifestyles are instant and modern. They prefer to enjoy life, pursue education and careers, and postpone marriage until they feel financially stable (Sofi Indriyanti, 2024; Herliana Riska, 2023).

Choosing *waithood* doesn't mean avoiding adulthood, but rather a form of mental readiness and responsibility to become the best version of yourself before committing to a family. According to Islam, postponing marriage is permissible only in emergency situations. If someone is mature and capable, marriage should be pursued immediately (Umasangadji, 2023; Wulandari, 2023).

Based on this phenomenon, researchers are interested in further understanding Gen Z's perceptions of marriage and the factors that influence their choice of *waithood*. This research focused on Pahlawan Village, North Binjai District, Binjai City, to gain a comprehensive picture of the local context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research method (research) to explore in depth the phenomenon of *waithood* among Generation Z. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe social reality based on the experiences and subjective understanding of informants. Data collection was carried out through two main techniques,

namely observation and interviews. Observations were made by observing the behavior of informants in everyday social life, especially in their interactions with family, peers, and the surrounding environment. The results of the observations were then described in a structured and logical narrative, to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding and analysis of the data.

In addition to observation, interview techniques were also used to obtain more in-depth data regarding Generation Z's reasons and considerations in making the decision to postpone marriage. Interviews were conducted in two formats: via Google forms distributed online and in person (face to face) to face) with several selected informants. The respondents were individuals from Generation Z aged 20 to 28 who had decided not to marry at a young age. This method allowed researchers to capture their emotional nuances, mindsets, and aspirations in a more personal and contextual way.

The sampling technique used was convenience sampling , selecting respondents based on their ease of access and availability for interviews. An online questionnaire served as an initial tool to gather general information and screen relevant potential informants. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the primary reasons for choosing waithood and the various implications arising from this decision, both from a family perspective, social norms, and environmental pressures. This approach is expected to uncover the social dynamics that influence Generation Z's decisions in shaping their life choices amidst evolving cultural changes and social expectations .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Waithood phenomenon , or the decision to postpone marriage, is not unique to Pahlawan Village, North Binjai District. This phenomenon has become a widespread social trend across Indonesia. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of North Sumatra Province in 2024, the marriage rate experienced a significant decline. In 2023, the number of marriages was recorded at 70,630, while in 2024, the figure dropped to 66,682. This decline also occurred in Binjai City, from 1,900 marriages in 2023 to 1,668 in 2024. This figure is quite striking, especially when compared to the population aged 20-28, which reached 51,290. This decline indicates that many individuals of productive age are delaying or even choosing not to marry.

waithood trend is based on various multidimensional factors. One of these is social pressure and shifting values in society. Integrating Islamic and social and humanitarian values is crucial in understanding this trend. Changing times and the influx of new values sometimes clash with old rules and regulations, resulting in social imbalances in society. This phenomenon can cause psychological stress and anxiety in society, especially for individuals who choose a different life path such as waithood . Therefore, a wise approach that integrates Islamic and social and humanitarian values is essential to create a comprehensive understanding and promote social balance.

From an Islamic perspective, waithood is not something that is immediately considered negative. Several great scholars such as Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir ath-Thabari , Abu Al-

Qasim Mahmud bin Umar az-Zamakhshari, and Imam Nawawi are known to have postponed marriage in order to pursue knowledge and worship. However, Islam does not fully justify waithood if it is not accompanied by sharia reasons. Factors that can be sharia reasons for postponing marriage include education, social and religious maturity, and economic readiness. Delaying marriage for these reasons can be justified as long as it is done with full awareness and personal responsibility.

One of the main factors influencing waithood identified in this study is economic factors. Rising prices of basic necessities and the high cost of living are significant factors for young people postponing marriage. Informant F (23 years old) stated that financial stability is a primary requirement for entering married life. He revealed that the high number of divorce cases due to economic pressures has made him more cautious and emphasized the importance of financial preparedness for both men and women. In this context, structural poverty, as regulated in Law Number 13 of 2011, is also a major cause of people's reluctance to take the step of marriage.

Education is also an important factor in the waithood decision. Informant A (22 years old) emphasized that her current focus is on completing her education and continuing her studies to a master's degree. She feels that dividing her roles as a student and a wife will be quite a heavy mental burden. Education is considered a long-term investment that can improve one's quality of life. Many Generation Z, especially women, see marriage as a phase to be achieved after completing important goals in their lives such as education and career. They tend to view marriage not as a social necessity, but rather a choice to be made when they are truly ready.

In addition to economic and educational factors, social pressure and psychological factors also influence the decision to wait. Several informants said they felt mentally unprepared for a long-term relationship, especially if they had not yet found a suitable partner. Informant R (21 years old) said that she was not yet in a relationship because she had not found one who met her personal criteria. This unpreparedness to accept a partner who did not meet her expectations reflects the new standards in social relations held by the younger generation. This is reinforced by the influence of social media and negative experiences in social relationships that strengthen the decision to postpone marriage.

Family factors are also a significant driver in the decision to postpone marriage. Informant D (22 years old), the eldest child from a modest family, feels a great responsibility towards his younger siblings. He feels he must be independent and successful first to make his parents happy and help his family. Parents' expectations that their first child will be the family's mainstay often lead individuals to choose to postpone marriage in order to focus on career development and the family's finances. This situation creates a dilemma between personal desires and social obligations within the family.

In general, waithood is not a form of defiance against social norms or religious teachings. Rather, it is a manifestation of the younger generation's deep reflection on their readiness for married life. Postponing marriage is a form of personal responsibility born of an awareness of the complexity of household roles amidst the challenges of modern life. Society

needs to understand that the decision to postpone marriage does not necessarily make an individual a social failure.

Waithood also does not conflict with human rights, as the choice to marry or not is a personal right that should not be dictated by external pressure. This phenomenon shows that the younger generation is increasingly rational and cautious in making major life decisions. They realize that marriage is not merely a ceremonial moment, but a long-term commitment that requires preparation across various aspects of life. Factors such as economic readiness, emotional maturity, education, career, and family support are key determinants in this decision. Therefore, a broader and more inclusive understanding of the increasingly prevalent waithood phenomenon within modern social structures is needed .

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on Generation Z's perceptions of marriage and the *waithood phenomenon* in Pahlawan Village, North Binjai District, Binjai City, it was found that the majority of respondents had a more rational and pragmatic view of marriage. For them, marriage is no longer seen as a necessity at a young age, but rather as a decision that requires careful consideration in terms of emotional readiness, financial readiness, and career stability. One important finding in this study is the tendency to delay marriage even though the age allows (*waithood*). The underlying factors include the desire to focus on education and career, personal economic instability, uncertainty in building long-term relationships, and the influence of a social environment that is increasingly open to unconventional lifestyles. Gen Z also tends to emphasize the importance of emotional maturity, financial independence, equality in relationships, mental readiness, and partner compatibility before deciding to marry. Thus, *waithood* among Gen Z in Pahlawan Village is not simply a form of unreasonable delay, but rather a reflection of social transformation and changing values regarding marriage. The results of this study indicate the need for intergenerational dialogue and a more open educational approach to bridge differing perspectives on marriage. Furthermore, the government and social institutions are also expected to pay more attention to the needs and challenges faced by the younger generation in preparing for married life in a realistic and contextual manner .

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