

## THE PHENOMENON OF MARRIAGE IS SCARY AMONG GENERATION Z IN BENGKULU CITY

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the factors influencing the emergence of the “Marriage is Scary” phenomenon among young people in Bengkulu City, which reflects the perception of marriage as an emotional, economic, and social burden. Using a descriptive quantitative approach and structural functionalism theory, this study involved 384 respondents who are socially active and were selected through purposive sampling. The findings indicate that psychological and sociocultural factors particularly concerns about mental wellbeing, priorities related to career and education, and exposure to social media are more dominant than economic factors in shaping fear of marriage. The novelty of this study lies in its quantitative approach that simultaneously examines seven internal and external factors. Unlike previous studies, which are mostly qualitative or focus on limited variables, this research identifies psychological factors, career and education priorities, and social media influence as the main determinants. Meanwhile, factors commonly considered dominant, such as economic pressure, childhood experiences, and divorce rates, are found to be insignificant. These findings also highlight a shift in values among Generation Z, who place greater emphasis on emotional readiness, independence, and self-development before entering marriage.

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### INTRODUCTION

Phenomenon Marriage is Scary (MiS) is now a widely developed narrative on social media, especially among the younger generation. The “Marriage is Scary” (MiS) phenomenon has emerged as a global narrative widely discussed on social media, particularly among younger generations. This narrative reflects the fear of the institution of marriage because it is considered to carry emotional, financial, and social burdens, as well as the risk of unhappiness. Generation Z grew up in a digital era full of rapid technological and information advancements and is known as a digitally connected, highly educated, and socially conscious generation (Apriliana, 2024).

The city of Bengkulu (area 150.35 km<sup>2</sup>, population 384,841) is divided into 9 districts, with 103,686

individuals from Generation Z (ages 10–29), focusing on those aged 13–28. In the local context, Bengkulu City shows a significant presence of Generation Z, making it a relevant setting for examining the MiS phenomenon. According to Statistics Indonesia (2024), the national divorce rate reached 399,921 cases, while the Bengkulu Class 1 Religious Court recorded a significant increase in divorce cases in Bengkulu City in 2024, with a total of 899 cases. This increasing trend indicates potential instability in marital institutions and strengthens the relevance of this study in understanding young people's perceptions of marriage.

The phenomenon of MiS that is rampant in social media and popular culture has shaped the negative view of Generation Z towards marriage. According to Herdiansyah and Khaira (2025), the emergence of the expression MiS reflects an individual's concern about long-term commitment, social pressure, and the possibility of unhappiness in married life. In today's digital era, the mindset of the younger generation, especially Generation Z, has undergone significant changes compared to the previous generation. According to Wijoyo et al. (2020), Generation Z, also called iGeneration or the internet generation, was born between 1997–2012 and has different characteristics from previous generations. Generation Z, as digital natives (Rastati, 2018), are highly exposed to the MiS phenomenon through social media content, ranging from confessional posts, viral Twitter threads, to TikTok videos discussing the negative aspects of married life.

Social media plays a significant role in shaping negative perceptions about marriage, with a large amount of content depicting negative experiences (Tirta and Arifin, 2025). The high intensity of social media use can also trigger emotional instability and anxiety among Generation Z (Yudha et al., 2023). The MiS phenomenon shows that fear of marriage does not emerge without cause but is influenced by personal experiences, environmental factors, and widespread media narratives. The phenomenon also reflects a shift in values among Generation Z, influenced by technology, social media, and increasing individualism (Aji, 2025).

This research is based on various previous studies discussing the MiS phenomenon. Previous studies have explored the MiS phenomenon from different perspectives, providing important insights into its causes and impacts. Tirta and Arifin (2025), in their study titled *“Phenomenological Studies: Marriage is Scary in Generation Z,”* found that negative perceptions of marriage are driven by exposure to negative social media content, psychological unpreparedness, and sociocultural pressures. The study also shows that such perceptions are influenced by personal experiences, social environments, and modern values emphasizing individual freedom, supported by theories from Freud, Bandura, and Tajfel.

Second, Oktaviani and Krismono (2025), in *“Analysis of the Marriage is Scary Phenomenon Among Generation Z: A Perspective of Islamic Law Sociology,”* revealed that narratives on platforms such as TikTok reinforce fear of marriage, especially regarding irresponsible partners, domestic violence, and social pressure. The study highlights the importance of inclusive premarital education that responds to psychological and social dynamics.

Third, Azkia (2025), in *“The Phenomenon of Marriage is Scary and the Factors Causing the Emergence of Modern Society,”* explains that fear of marriage is increasingly widespread due to changing social and cultural values. The study identifies five main factors: increasing divorce rates, economic burden, shifting values toward individual freedom, career and education priorities, and past relationship trauma.

However, existing studies are predominantly qualitative and tend to focus on limited or specific factors rather than providing a comprehensive analysis. There is still limited quantitative research that simultaneously examines multiple internal and external variables influencing the MiS phenomenon, particularly in specific local contexts such as Bengkulu City. In addition, previous studies tend to emphasize economic and structural factors, while the role of psychological and sociocultural factors has not been thoroughly examined in an integrated model.

In addition, changes in social values in society affect perceptions of marriage (Adhani and Aripudin, 2024). The MiS trend reflects a shift in mindset between millennials and Generation Z, where independence, self-development, and personal freedom are prioritized (Oktaviani and Krismono, 2025). Various studies indicate that Generation Z is highly influenced by digital environments and exposure to negative marital content.

Strategic efforts are needed to provide a more balanced understanding of marriage. Media, educational institutions, government, and community leaders are expected to play a role in promoting social and emotional literacy so that marriage is perceived as a positive and healthy institution.

Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the factors influencing the emergence of the MiS phenomenon among Generation Z in Bengkulu City using a descriptive quantitative approach. This study simultaneously examines seven variables, including internal factors (childhood experiences, fear of long-term commitment, anxiety, and mental health) and external factors (divorce rates, economic pressure, career and education priorities, and social media influence), to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors shape perceptions of marriage.

## METHOD

This study applied a quantitative design combining descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze factors associated with the *Marriage is Scary* (MiS) phenomenon among Generation Z in Bengkulu City. The approach is not only descriptive but also inferential, as it examines relationships and influences among variables using statistical tests. Data were collected between March and May 2025 through online questionnaires (Google Forms) and limited offline distribution. The study utilized both primary data from structured questionnaires and interviews, and secondary data from official publications and relevant academic sources.

The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale and was developed based on theoretical perspectives on psychological readiness and social influences. All variables were measured using a 1–5 Likert scale, and each item was constructed based on predefined indicators to ensure accurate measurement. The MiS phenomenon is defined as a social narrative portraying marriage as frightening and risky. It is measured through indicators such as fear of commitment, concerns about conflict or divorce, anxiety about responsibilities, and distrust of marriage. Internal factors include personal experiences and mental health aspects, while external factors include divorce rates, economic pressure, career priorities, and social media influence.

The population consisted of 103,686 Generation Z individuals. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a minimum sample of 384 respondents was required. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants. The criteria included individuals aged 18–28 years, residing in Bengkulu City, actively using social media, and having perspectives on or considerations regarding marriage. These criteria ensured the relevance of the sample.

Data analysis used descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis summarized the data, while inferential analysis tested relationships among variables. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used to examine the effects of internal and external factors on the MiS phenomenon. Hypothesis testing was conducted at a 0.05 significance level. If  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected, indicating a significant effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the discussion, the data description of each variable will be explained, as well as a table containing the description of the data. This description is the result of data processing using the help of Microsoft Excel and the SPSS version 26 program. The following are the results of the percentage of profile descriptions from 384 respondents.

**Table 1 : Respondent Profile Description**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Presentase</b>
1	Women	257	66,93%
2	Male	127	33,07%
	Quantity	384	100,00%

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

Based on table 1, which shows that the majority of respondents are female (66.93%), while males account

for 33.07%. This imbalance indicates that the findings of the *Marriage is Scary* (MiS) phenomenon are more reflective of women’s perspectives. This is relevant, as women tend to exhibit higher sensitivity toward emotional and relational risks in marriage, which may contribute to stronger perceptions of fear.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Test Results**

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Hours of deviation
1	<b>The phenomenon of marriage is scary</b>	384	10	40	29,32	4,179
2	<b>Personal experiences from childhood</b>	384	4	20	13,12	3,625
3	<b>Fear of long-term commitments</b>	384	4	20	14,25	3,123
4	<b>Anxiety and mental health issues</b>	384	4	20	14,93	2,550
5	<b>High divorce rate</b>	384	4	20	14,21	2,776
6	<b>Economic pressures</b>	384	4	20	15,43	2,858
7	<b>Priority on Career and Education</b>	384	7	20	15,55	2,489
8	<b>The Influence of Social Media</b>	384	4	20	14,15	3,067
	<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	384				

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

Descriptive statistics in table 2 reveal that career and education priority (X6) has the highest mean score (M = 15.55), followed by economic pressure (X5) (M = 15.43). This suggests that pragmatic and future-oriented considerations are dominant factors influencing Generation Z’s perception of marriage. In contrast, childhood experience (X1) shows the lowest mean (M = 13.12), indicating that early-life experiences play a less significant role compared to current socio-economic conditions. These findings imply that the MiS phenomenon is more strongly shaped by present realities rather than past experiences.

**Table 3. Normality Test Results**

		Unstandardized Residual
N		384
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	,0000000
	Hours of deviation	3,58836309
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,030
	Positive	,029
	Negative	-,030
Test Statistic		,030
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,200 <sup>c,d</sup>

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

The normality test results in table 3 show a significance value of 0.200 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the data are normally distributed and meet the assumptions required for further parametric analysis. This supports the validity of subsequent inferential testing.

**Table 4. Summary of Pearson Correlation Test Results**

No	Variable	R table	Sig (2-tailed)	Remarks
1	X1	0,098	0,146**	Weak positive relationships
2	X2	0,098	0,187**	Weak positive relationships
3	X3	0,098	0,386**	Relationship is positive
4	X4	0,098	0,327**	Relationship is positive
5	X5	0,098	0,219**	Weak positive relationships
6	X6	0,098	0,342**	Relationship is positive
7	X7	0,098	0,419**	A strong positive relationship

Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed).\*

Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed).\*\*

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

The Pearson correlation results in table 4 indicate that all independent variables have positive and significant relationships with the MiS phenomenon. The strongest relationship is found in social media influence (X7) ( $r = 0.419$ ), followed by mental health and anxiety (X3) ( $r = 0.386$ ). This suggests that digital exposure and psychological vulnerability play a crucial role in shaping fear of marriage. Meanwhile, childhood experience (X1) has the weakest correlation ( $r = 0.146$ ), reinforcing the idea that past experiences are less influential than contemporary factors. These findings highlight the growing influence of modern social environments, particularly digital media, in shaping perceptions of marriage.

**Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Test**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Say.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14,921	1,480		10,082	,000
	Personal experiences from childhood	-,044	,066	-,038	-,674	,501
	fear of long-term commitments	-,109	,081	-,081	-1,351	,177
	Anxiety and mental health issues	,344	,089	,210	3,866	,000
	high divorce rate	,134	,099	,089	1,364	,173
	Economic pressures	-,034	,080	-,023	-,423	,673
	Priority on Career and Education	,291	,087	,174	3,345	,001
	The Influence of Social Media	,387	,083	,284	4,682	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Fenomena marriagae is scary

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

Further analysis using multiple linear regression in table 5 shows that only three variables significantly influence the MiS phenomenon: mental health and anxiety (X3) ( $B = 0.344$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), career and education priority (X6) ( $B = 0.291$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), and social media influence (X7) ( $B = 0.387$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Among these, social media has the strongest effect, indicating that exposure to online content significantly amplifies negative perceptions of marriage. This may be explained by the widespread presence of negative narratives related to relationships, such as divorce, infidelity, and financial instability on digital platforms. In contrast, variables such as childhood experience, fear of commitment, divorce rates, and economic pressure are not statistically significant, suggesting that their effects may be indirect or mediated by other variables within the model.

**Table 6. Simultaneous Test Results (F)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Say.
1	Regression	1755,960	7	250,851	19,126	,000b
	Residual	4931,642	376	13,116		
	Total	6687,602	383			

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

The simultaneous test results in **Table 6** show that all independent variables collectively have a significant effect on the MiS phenomenon ( $F = 19.126$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that, although some variables are not significant individually, they still contribute meaningfully when analyzed together within the model.

**Table 7. Partial Test Results (T)**

Coefficientsa						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Say.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14,921	1,480		10,082	,000
	Personal experiences from childhood	-,044	,066	-,038	-,674	,501
	fear of long-term commitments	-,109	,081	-,081	-1,351	,177
	Anxiety and mental health issues	,344	,089	,210	3,866	,000
	high divorce rate	,134	,099	,089	1,364	,173
	Economic pressures	-,034	,080	-,023	-,423	,673
	Priority on Career and Education	,291	,087	,174	3,345	,001
	The Influence of Social Media	,387	,083	,284	4,682	,000

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

The partial test results presented in Table 7 are consistent with the regression analysis in Table 5, confirming that only mental health and anxiety (X3), career and education priority (X6), and social media influence (X7) have a statistically significant partial effect on the MiS phenomenon.

**Table 8. Double Determination Coefficient (r<sup>2</sup>)**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,512a	,263	,249	3,62161
a. Predictors: (Constant), X7, X5, X1, X6, X3, X2, X4				

Source: Processing Results with SPSS, 26

Finally, the coefficient of determination in table 8 shows an R Square value of 0.263, meaning that 26.3% of the variation in the MiS phenomenon can be explained by the variables included in this study. This indicates that the model has moderate explanatory power. However, this also reveals an important limitation, as 73.7% of the variance is influenced by other factors not included in the model. This suggests that the MiS phenomenon is complex and cannot be fully explained by the variables examined in this study. Other potential factors, such as cultural values, family background, personal relationship experiences, and broader societal expectations, may also play a significant role. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables or adopt mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

**1. The Influence of Personal Experience Factors from Childhood (X1) on the Phenomenon of MiS**

First, childhood experience (X1) was found to have no significant effect ( $t = -0.674$ ;  $p = 0.501$ ). This suggests that past negative experiences, such as parental conflict or divorce, do not directly shape fear of marriage in adulthood. This finding indicates a shift in generational perspective, where current conditions play a more dominant role than early-life experiences. This result contradicts previous studies (Tirta & Arifin, 2025), which emphasized the importance of childhood environment, suggesting that contextual and cultural differences may influence these outcomes.

**2. The Effect of the Fear Factor of Long-Term Commitment (X2) on the MiS Phenomenon**

Similarly, fear of long-term commitment (X2) does not significantly affect the MiS phenomenon ( $t = -1.351$ ;  $p = 0.177$ ). This implies that fear of commitment is not the primary driver of marriage anxiety among Generation Z. Instead, commitment concerns may be secondary and influenced by broader psychological or social factors. This finding differs from prior research, which identified commitment fear as a central factor, indicating that its role may be weakening in contemporary contexts.

**3. Anxiety Factors and Mental Health Problems (X3) to the MiS Phenomenon**

In contrast, anxiety and mental health (X3) show a significant positive effect ( $t = 3.866$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that individuals with higher psychological distress are more likely to perceive marriage as a burden rather than a source of stability. This finding highlights the increasing importance of mental health in shaping life decisions among Generation Z, supporting previous research that emphasizes emotional readiness as a key determinant.

**4. The Effect of High Divorce Rate (X4) on the MiS Phenomenon**

The divorce rate factor (X4) was not significant ( $t = 1.364$ ;  $p = 0.173$ ). This suggests that macro-level social phenomena, such as increasing divorce rates, are not directly internalized as personal fear by individuals. Instead, their influence may be mediated through other channels, particularly social media exposure.

**5. The Influence of Economic Pressure Factors (X5) on the MiS Phenomenon**

Economic pressure (X5) also showed no significant effect ( $t = -0.423$ ;  $p = 0.673$ ). This finding is notable, as it challenges the common assumption that financial instability is a primary barrier to marriage. It indicates that Generation Z may perceive economic readiness as important, but not necessarily as a source of fear. This contradicts

previous findings, suggesting that economic concerns may function more as a rational consideration rather than an emotional deterrent.

#### 6. **The Influence of Priority Factors on Career and Education (X6) on the MiS Phenomenon**

On the other hand, career and education priority (X6) has a significant positive effect ( $t = 3.345$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). This reflects a shift in value orientation, where self-development and personal achievement are prioritized over traditional life milestones such as marriage. Marriage is therefore perceived as a potential constraint rather than a necessity.

#### 7. **The Influence of Social Media Influence Factors (X7) on the MiS Phenomenon (Y)**

Finally, social media influence (X7) shows the strongest and most significant effect ( $t = 4.682$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that digital exposure plays a central role in shaping perceptions of marriage. Negative narratives circulating on social media such as divorce, infidelity, and domestic conflict contribute significantly to the construction of fear among Generation Z. This finding reinforces the idea that social media acts not only as an information channel but also as a powerful agent of social perception.

#### 8. **Talcott Parsons Functional Structural Theory (AGIL) Analysis**

From the perspective of Talcott Parsons' AGIL framework, the MiS phenomenon can be understood as a reflection of structural and cultural transformation. In the Adaptation (A) function, Generation Z adjusts to economic uncertainty and rapid digitalization, which reshapes their perception of marriage as a risky institution. In the Goal Attainment (G) function, the significant influence of career and education priorities (X6) indicates that personal achievement has become the primary life goal, replacing marriage as a central objective. In the Integration (I) function, the coexistence of traditional expectations (marriage as a norm) and modern values (individual freedom) creates tension, contributing to ambivalence toward marriage. In the Latency (L) function, the strong influence of social media (X7) demonstrates how cultural values are maintained and transformed through digital platforms, where negative narratives about marriage are continuously reproduced. Overall, these findings suggest that the MiS phenomenon is not merely an individual attitude but a systemic outcome of shifting social structures, cultural values, and technological influences.

This study has several limitations. First, the explanatory power of the model is relatively moderate ( $R^2 = 0.263$ ), indicating that a large proportion (73.7%) of the variance is influenced by variables not included in this study. Second, the sample is dominated by female respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Third, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias. Finally, this study focuses only on quantitative analysis, which may not fully capture the complexity of individual perceptions. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables and adopt mixed-method approaches.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the phenomenon of MiS in Generation Z in Bengkulu City, the author can conclude as follows: Based on the results of the hypothesis test, this study analyzed seven independent factors (X) consisting of three internal factors (personal experiences from childhood, fear of long-term commitments, and anxiety and mental health problems) as well as four external factors (high divorce rate, economic pressure, priorities on career and education, and the influence of social media) on the phenomenon of MiS (Y) in Generation Z in Bengkulu City. These results revealed that only three factors had a significant effect individually, namely anxiety and mental health issues, priorities on career and education, and the influence of social media, while the other four factors did not show a partially significant influence despite still contributing to the simultaneous influence. This study is limited to Generation Z in Bengkulu City, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Additionally, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias. Based on these findings, the author is requested to elaborate on the policy implications, practical implications, opportunities for further research, and contribution to knowledge derived from the study.

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