

# The Influence of Marriage Perceptions on Decision-Making Among Early Adult Women

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**Abstract.** Marriage is seen as an important milestone in life. However, many young adult women choose to delay marriage for various reasons. This study aims to examine the influence of marriage perceptions on marriage decision-making among young adult women. Using purposive sampling, 302 women Indonesian citizens aged 25-39 years old in romantic relationships participated. Simple regression analysis showed a negative effect ( $t = -4.15$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) with  $R^2 = 0.0544$ , indicating that marriage perception influenced decision-making by 5.44%. This small contribution suggests that other psychological, social or cultural factors may play a more dominant role. This study also has social implications in encouraging changes in society's perspective to be more open, empathetic and non-judgmental towards individuals who choose to delay marriage. Future research should incorporate a broader set of variables, including cultural, economic, and familial factors, to capture the multifaceted influences on delayed marriage decisions. Employing mixed-method approaches may also provide richer and more nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

**Keywords:** *Perceptions About Marriage; Marriage Decision Making; Early Adult Women*

## 1 Introduction

Marriage represents a significant developmental milestone within the human life cycle, reflecting an individual's transition toward maturity, enduring commitment, and the establishment of family structures that contribute to social stability (1). However, along with the times, the phenomenon of postponing marriage is increasingly widespread, especially among early adult women aged 20-30 years. Many of them choose to delay marriage in order to pursue education, career, financial independence, and emotional and psychological readiness [2, 3]. Two distinct patterns of thinking emerge in this context: some women no longer make marriage as central life goal, while others choose to postpone it for reasons of readiness and careful consideration [4, 5].

Data from the Central Statistics Agency [6] indicate a consistent decline in marriage rates in Indonesia, accompanied by an increase in the average age of marriage for women to 22.3 years [7]. In fact, the average age of women getting married in the province of DKI Jakarta has reached 22.54 years [8]. This phenomenon is known as "waithood", refers to a transitional phase in which individuals delay marriage despite being at the ideal age for marriage. This delay is closely related to individuals' perceptions of marriage, which is how they cognitively and emotionally interpret, evaluate, and assign meaning to the institution of marriage [8, 9]. Such

perceptions shape how individuals weigh the perceived benefits and risks of marriage, influencing whether they approach it as a source of fulfillment or as a potential constraint on personal growth. When perceptions are positive and realistic, individuals are more likely to engage in deliberate and confident decision-making, whereas negative or ambivalent perceptions can contribute to avoidance, hesitation, or postponement of marriage [10, 11].

Within the Indonesian socio-cultural context, early adult women often face social pressures and expectations to marry in their twenties; thus, so delaying marriage is often viewed negatively [12, 13]. Consequently, many experience a psychological dilemma between personal aspirations and societal norms. Factors such as past experiences, education, religious values, economic conditions, and relationships quality all contribute to shaping perceptions of marriage and, consequently, influence the process of marital decision-making [1, 14]. Indeed, deciding to marry is a multifaceted cognitive–emotional process that involves personal beliefs, rational evaluations, and readiness to assume social and relational responsibilities [15, 16].

Despite increasing scholarly attention to the phenomenon of delayed marriage, there remains limited research examining how perceptions of marriage influence decision-making among early adult women, particularly those in committed relationships. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding the psychological and social dynamics that shape marriage-related decisions, as well as for identifying the value shifts occurring within modern society. Such understanding can also serve as a foundation for developing relevant interventions in the fields of family psychology and adult development [2, 17]. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between perceptions of marriage and marriage decision-making among early adult women, with a particular focus on those in serious or committed relationships.

## **2 Literature Review**

Decision-making is a complex process and is influenced by various psychological, social, and cultural factors. Theory of Planned Behavior emphasized the importance of intentions, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control in decision-making, which is particularly applicable to the context of the marriage decision [18]. There are five decision-making styles, namely rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant and spontaneous [19]. These reflect variations in the way individuals consider choices, including in relational aspects such as marriage. Research by [20] also highlighted the importance of awareness of red flags in relationships and mature decision-making in determining long-term commitment. Furthermore, this process is seen as a risk-intensive act, where individuals weigh the alternatives and possible outcomes of available options [21].

In the context of marriage, these decision-making processes are shaped significantly by individual perceptions of what marriage entails. Perception is the process of filtering and interpreting information to form meaning about an object or situation, which in this case is the institution of marriage [22]. Individuals' perceptions of marriage are strongly influenced by past experiences, cultural values and social expectations, thus explaining why perceptions of marriage can differ significantly between individuals [23]. Study showed that positive perceptions of marriage correlate with intention to marry and realistic relational expectations, while negative perceptions, such as seeing marriage as an obstacle to personal freedom or emotional risk, tend to be associated with delay or avoidance of marriage [24]. Research by [25] also supports these findings by showing that family models, media representations, and personal experiences have a major influence in shaping marriage perceptions and decisions.

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how perceptions of marriage influence decision-making in early adult women in romantic relationships, particularly in Indonesia. Most previous research has focused on marriage decision-making in general, without considering the psychological and social dynamics of specific age groups facing social norm pressures or personal value conflicts. This study aims to contribute both theoretically—by expanding the understanding of how personal perceptions shape marital decision-making—and practically, by informing educational and counseling strategies for young women navigating complex relational decisions.

### **3 Method**

This study uses a quantitative approach using a correlational research design that aims to examine the extent to which perceptions of marriage influence decision-making to marry in early adult women. This approach was chosen because it allows to see the relationship between variables objectively and measurable through numerical data. Data collection was carried out using a survey method using a Google form that was widely distributed to respondents who met the research criteria on Telegram, X (Twitter), and WhatsApp. The instruments used in data collection consisted of two standardized psychological measurement tools that had gone through a validation and reliability process, namely the Based on the results presented in the table, the Perception of Marriage Scale (GATM) demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.836. This scale measures individuals' cognitive and emotional evaluations of marriage through subscales such as the meaning of marriage, expectations toward marital life, and readiness for marital commitment. Example items include statements such as "Marriage is an important phase of adult maturity" and "A good marriage requires emotional and financial readiness."

Meanwhile, the Marriage Decision-Making Scale (RDS) also showed high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.883. This scale assesses the psychological processes involved in deciding to marry, consisting of subscales such as rational consideration, emotional readiness, and external influence. Example items include "I consider financial stability before deciding to marry" and "Family expectations affect my decision to marry." Both scales demonstrate adequate internal reliability, indicating that the items consistently measure their respective constructs.

Data were analyzed using simple linear regression was chosen to determine the predictive effect of marriage perception (independent variable) on marriage decision-making (dependent variable), as both variables are continuous and assumed to have a linear relationship. The analysis process was assisted by Jamovi statistical software. The study involved 271 participants who met the inclusion criteria: Indonesian women aged 25 to 39 years currently engaged in a romantic relationship. In addition, this study also paid attention to the principles of research ethics, including by providing clear information to prospective respondents regarding the objectives, procedures, and confidentiality of respondents, as well as obtaining voluntary participation approval through informed consent. This was done to ensure that participation in the study took place ethically and responsibly, and to guarantee the protection of the rights of research subjects.

## 4 Result

This study consists of normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and hypothesis tests. Respondents in this study were 302 women (Indonesian citizens) aged 25-39 years and in a romantic relationship. The following table shows the distribution of demographic data of the subjects involved in this study. Demographic data of the subjects are seen from age, region of origin, final education level, employment status, and parental marital status. The details can be seen in the table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of research subjects

Characteristics	Type	F	(%)
Age	25 years	213	70,53
	26 years	36	11,92
	27 years	19	6,29
	28 years	14	4,64
	29 years	9	2,98
	30 years	2	0,66
	31 years	1	0,33
	32 years	1	0,33
	33 years	2	0,66
	34 years	1	0,33
	35 years	3	0,99
	36 years	1	0,33
Region of Origin	Java	198	65,56
	Outside Java	104	34,44
Final Education Level	Not in College	106	35,10
	College	196	64,90
Employment Status	Not Working	66	21,85
	Employed	236	78,15
Parental Marital Status	Married	274	90,73
	Divorced	28	9,27

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the majority of respondents are in the age range of 25 years, which is 70.53%. Based on the area of origin, most respondents come from Java Island (65.56%). In terms of the last level of education, most respondents are college graduates (64.90%). Meanwhile, based on employment status, most respondents are individuals who work (78.15%). Based on the marital status of parents, the majority of respondents come from families with parents who are still married, which is 90.73%. The results of the data description can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2.** Data Description

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Perception of Marriage	302	10	59	34.2	9.82
Decision-Making to Marry	302	18	60	46.3	7.16

Based on the results of the data description, the scores of each variable were categorized into three categories, namely high, medium, and low. This can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Variable Score Categorization

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Perception of Marriage	17,2%	68,5%	14,2%
Decision-Making to Marry	14,2%	71,5%	14,2%

Based on the results of the normality test, it is shown that both variables are normally distributed. This can be seen in Table 4, where the normality test of both variables has a significance value of  $0.058 > 0.05$ .

**Table 4.** Normality Test

<b>Statistic Kolmogorov-Smirnov</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Perception of Marriage	0.058	Normal

The results of the linearity test of the variables of perception of marriage and decision making to marry fall into the linear category, meaning that the direction of the relationship between the two variables shows a linear direction if one variable is high or low, it will affect the other variable to be high or low as well. This can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Linearity Test

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Perception of Marriage</b>	<b>Decision-Making to Marry</b>
Perception of Marriage	Pearson's rho	-	
	p-value	-	
Decision-Making to Marry	Pearson's rho	-0.233	-
	p-value	< 0.001	-

Based on the results of the heteroscedasticity test, it can be seen that the data does not contain heteroscedasticity. This can be seen in Table 6, where the significance value is  $0.740 > 0.05$ .

**Table 6.** Heteroscedasticity Test

	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Breusch-Pagan	0.110	0.740	There is No Heteroscedasticity

Based on simple linear regression analysis, a significance value of  $0.001 < 0.05$  was obtained, indicating that the hypothesis was accepted. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.0544 indicated that perceptions about marriage contributed 5.44% to the variation in decision-

making to marry, while the rest was influenced by other factors outside this research model. The regression coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) obtained was -0.170 with a t value of -4.15 and a p value of 0.001. These results indicate that perceptions about marriage have an influence on decision-making to marry with a negative relationship.

**Table 7.** Simple Linear Regression Test

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	P
1	0.233	0.0544	17.3	1	300	< 0.001

**Table 8.** The regression coefficient value

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	P
Intercept	52.146	1.4571	35.79	< 0.001
Perception of Marriage	-0.170	0.0409	-4.15	< 0.001

This study also conducted a difference test to see if there were differences in perceptions about marriage and decision-making to marry based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Based on the results of the difference test using the independent sample t-test, it was found that there was a significant average difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the perception of marriage between respondents from Java and outside Java. Respondents from outside Java tend to have a more positive perception of marriage compared to respondents from Java. On the other hand, there was no significant average difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the perception of marriage based on final education level, employment status, or parental marital status.

**Table 9.** Difference Test of Marriage Perception and Marriage Decision-Making Based on Demographic Characteristics

Factor	Marriage Perception			Marriage Decision-Making		
	N	p	M	N	p	M
General	302	< 0,001	34,2	302	< 0,001	46,3
Area of Origin						
Java	198	0,004	33,0	198	0,363	46,6
Outside Java	104		36,5	104		45,9
Final Education Level						
Not in College	106	0,767	34,0	106	0,880	46,3
College	196		34,3	196		46,3
Employment Status						
Not Working	66	0,511	33,5	66	0,225	45,8
Employed	236		34,4	236		46,5
Parent's Marital Status						
Married	274	0,116	33,9	274	0,861	46,3
Divorced	28		37,0	28		46,3

Furthermore, based on the results of the difference test on the variable of decision-making to marry, there was no significant average difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) based on region of origin, final education level, employment status, or parental marital status. This indicates that the decision-making process related to marriage among early adult women in this study tends to be consistent across different backgrounds, suggesting that individual perceptions and psychological factors may play a more dominant role than external demographic influences.

## 5 Discussion

The results of this study indicate a significant negative influence between perceptions of marriage on marriage decision making in early adult women. This means that the more positive a woman's perception of marriage is, the more likely the individual is to delay making the decision to get married. This finding strengthens the results of previous studies conducted by [26] and [27], which revealed that individuals with positive views of marriage tend to delay marriage, because they have high expectations of the quality of married life and want to ensure their overall readiness, both in terms of emotional, financial, and psychological before actually making the decision to get married. Positive perceptions in this context do not mean an attraction that leads directly to the decision to marry, but rather reflect caution and a desire to wait for conditions that are considered ideal.

However, this study is not in line with the findings presented by [28], which show that positive perceptions of marriage actually encourage individuals to get married immediately, because they view marriage as valuable and urgent. This difference suggests that perceptions of marriage are complex and contextual, depending on the individual's background, values, and relationship dynamics. This study also reveals that a more positive view of marriage is not always accompanied by a real readiness to get married, but may be influenced by high expectations of a harmonious, idealized and conflict-free marriage relationship. These unrealistic expectations can make individuals feel hesitant and ultimately delay the decision to marry for fear that these expectations will not be achieved.

While these findings make an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of marriage decision-making in early adult women, it should be noted that the use of online survey methods in data collection has a number of limitations. Although the effect size was modest ( $R^2 = 5.44\%$ ), the statistical significance suggests that perceptions of marriage do play a measurable role in influencing decision-making behavior, albeit alongside many other factors.

One of the main limitations is the possibility of representation bias as respondents who were able to access and complete the online questionnaire generally came from groups with good internet access, which may not reflect the social, economic and cultural diversity of the entire population of early adult women in Indonesia, especially those living in remote areas with limited digital access. Therefore, for further research it is recommended to use a mixed methods approach. This approach allows researchers to delve deeper into the subjective meanings of individuals' perceptions of marriage, as well as explore other factors that may influence decision-making.

## 6 Conclusion

The results of the data analysis indicate that perceptions of marriage significantly influence the decision to marry among early adult women. Quantitatively, the perception of marriage variable contributed 5.44% to marriage decision-making. Although the effect is statistically significant, the remaining 94.56% of the variance suggests that numerous other factors play a more substantial role. This finding underscores that the decision to marry is a complex, multidimensional process, shaped not only by one's perception of marriage but also by a constellation of factors such as emotional maturity, prior relationship experiences, social and cultural expectations, and economic considerations.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insight for early adult women in evaluating their emotional, psychological, and social readiness before committing to marriage. The study also highlights the need for supportive social environments—including family, partners, and community networks—that respect individual autonomy in marital decision-making. Fostering a nonjudgmental, empathetic, and understanding atmosphere may help individuals make choices based on personal readiness rather than external or societal pressure.

At a broader level, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on shifting societal attitudes toward delayed marriage. It encourages families and communities to become open, compassionate, and non-stigmatizing support systems, enabling individuals to navigate marriage decisions with greater self-awareness and confidence. By promoting constructive dialogue and inclusive social understanding, societies can create conditions in which marriage decisions reflect genuine preparedness and mutual respect, rather than conformity to age norms or cultural demands.

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