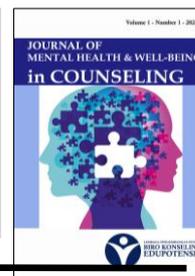


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# Patterns of Marriage Preparation Among Students in Tasikmalaya

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### ABSTRACT

Marriage is an important developmental stage in early adulthood that requires emotional, psychological, social, and financial readiness. However, evidence shows that many university students express a desire to marry at a young age despite lacking adequate preparation. This study aims to describe the level of marital readiness among university students in Tasikmalaya within the early adulthood age range (18–25 years) and to formulate implications for classical guidance services in higher education. This quantitative descriptive study involved 511 students selected through simple random sampling. The instrument used was the PREPARE Inventory (Fowers & Olson, 1992), adapted by Darajatun (2024), which encompasses 11 psychosocial dimensions of marital readiness. The results show that most students exhibit high levels of marital readiness, with 40.5% categorized as vitalized and 49.7% as harmonious. A total of 9.8% fall into the traditional category, and no respondents were classified as conflicted. The highest scores were found in the dimensions of children and parenting and sexual relationship, while the lowest scores emerged in personality issue and communication. Further analysis indicates that students aged 18–21 and those aged 22–25 demonstrate similar levels of marital readiness, suggesting that age does not substantially differentiate marital readiness among respondents. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of developing structured classical guidance services to strengthen weaker aspects of marital readiness, particularly communication skills, personality management, and emotional preparedness as students transition into married life.



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### Introduction

Marriage is an important developmental task in early adulthood that requires psychological, emotional, social, and financial readiness (Zajuli, 2020). However, many students enter marriage without adequate preparation, putting them at risk of conflict, disharmony, and divorce (Saidiyah & Julianto, 2017). National data indicates that early marriage rates in Indonesia remain high (BPS, 2023; People's Welfare Indicators, 2024), while in Tasikmalaya City, the divorce rate among young couples remains alarming, reaching 4,147 cases in 2017 and still recorded at 1,838 cases in 2022 (Qomariah et al., 2021); Tasikmalaya City Religious Court, 2023). This condition reinforces the findings of Fowers & Olson (1992) that a lack of communication and conflict resolution skills are the dominant causes of marital instability.

In early adulthood, individuals are expected to begin making significant decisions, including choosing a partner and starting a family (Santrock, 2018). Marriage readiness among students is an important issue because

the desire to marry at a young age is not always accompanied by emotional and psychosocial readiness (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Emotional maturity, family experience, perceptions of marriage, and social pressure also influence this readiness (Sari & Sunarti, 2013). The phenomenon of increasing divorce cases, domestic violence, and fatherless issues also indicates the lack of readiness of young couples in facing the dynamics of marriage (Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Readiness for marriage is also closely related to psychological well-being. Ryff (1989) explains that psychological well-being includes self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, mastery of the environment, life goals, and personal development as the foundation of individual maturity in building a marriage. Research by Rahimsyah & Muhajirin (2025) shows that most students have moderate to high levels of psychological well-being, which could potentially serve as a basis for readiness to enter into marriage. However, students' understanding of marriage preparation is still diverse and often not based on adequate information (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). This emphasizes the need for counseling services for students. However, counseling services in higher education tend to focus on academic issues and do not yet accommodate needs related to relationships, family, and marriage preparation (Fatmawati & Nurhastuti, 2021). In fact, research shows that structured services can significantly increase marriage readiness (McGeorge & Carlson, 2006).

In addition, research on students' readiness for marriage that comprehensively measures 11 psychosocial aspects is still limited, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Recent studies also emphasize that age differences and media influence affect students' motivation and concerns in preparing for marriage (Cho & Yu, 2019). Therefore, a more in-depth mapping of students' level of readiness for marriage is needed as a basis for designing relevant classical guidance services in higher education. Thus, this study aims to describe the level of marriage readiness among students in Tasikmalaya City in the early adult age range (18–25 years) and to formulate implications for the development of classical guidance services to support students' readiness to face married life maturely.

## Method

The population in this study consisted of 29,690 students aged 18–25 years from several universities in Tasikmalaya City, including Siliwangi State University, Indonesia University of Education Tasikmalaya Campus, Muhammadiyah University Tasikmalaya, Perjuangan University, Bakti Tunas Husada University, Bakti Kencana University, and Mayasari Bakti University. Based on sample size calculations using the Simple Random Sampling technique, a minimum of 344 respondents were required. However, during the data collection process, 511 students participated and voluntarily completed the online questionnaire, and all responses met the inclusion criteria. Therefore, 511 respondents were used in the final analysis, thereby increasing the accuracy and representativeness of the descriptive results of this study.

Marriage readiness is measured using the Marriage Readiness Inventory developed by Fowers & Olson (1992) and adapted by Darajatun (2024) for students in Indonesia. This instrument consists of 66 statements with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). It measures 11 psychosocial dimensions, namely Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationships, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation. This adapted instrument has undergone construct validity and convergent validity tests and shows strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.80, thus having high reliability. The data collection procedure consisted of three stages. First, in the preparation stage, researchers submitted a permit application to participating universities and obtained access to student directory data as the basis for sampling. Second, in the implementation stage, the Marriage Readiness Inventory instrument was distributed online via Google Form to selected students using the Simple Random Sampling technique. The data collection process was carried out over two months to achieve an adequate response rate. Third, in the verification stage, researchers checked the completeness of responses and filtered out missing or inconsistent data to ensure accuracy and minimize research bias.

All participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study and voluntarily agreed to informed consent. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussions

### Results

#### 1. Overview Marital Readiness

Based on the descriptive analysis of 511 university students in Tasikmalaya City, marital readiness was classified into four categories: Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional, and Conflicted.

**Table 1 Overview of Marital Readiness**

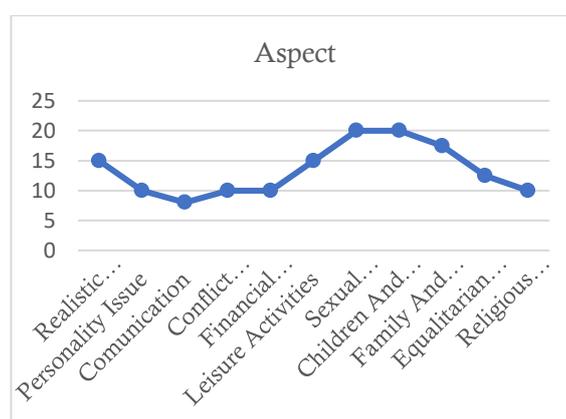
Category	Score Interval	f	%
Vitalized	$\geq 250$	207	40.5
Harmonious	151-175	245	49.7
Traditional	126-150	50	9.8
Conflicted	$\leq 125$	-	-
Total		511	100

The distribution displayed heterogeneous levels of readiness across respondents. The results showed that 207 students (40.5%) were categorized as Vitalized (score  $> 240$ ), indicating very high readiness characterized by mature communication, conflict management, emotional stability, and strong commitment. This group reflects individuals well-prepared to build stable and healthy marital relationships. A total of 245 students (49.7%) fell into the Harmonious category (score 151–175), representing high readiness. Individuals in this category demonstrated adequate understanding of marital roles and responsibilities, effective communication, and adaptability to marital changes. This group constituted the majority of respondents.

Meanwhile, 50 students (9.8%) were identified in the Traditional category (score 126–150), reflecting low readiness. Students in this category tended to view marriage more conventionally and displayed limitations in emotional maturity, conflict management, and financial preparedness. Notably, no respondents were placed in the Conflicted category (score  $< 125$ ), suggesting the absence of extremely low readiness or highly problematic interpersonal functioning within the sample. Overall, these findings indicate that most students possess high to very high marital readiness, while a smaller subset demonstrates lower readiness that warrants attention.

#### 2. Marital Readiness by Aspect

The mean scores across specific aspects of marital readiness show distinct strengths and weaknesses.

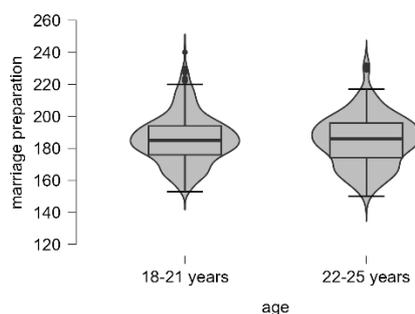


**Figure 1 Marital Readiness by Aspect**

Children and Parenting emerged as the highest-scoring aspect, followed by Sexual Relationship, Family and Friends, and Leisure Activities. These findings indicate that students show adequate preparedness for parenting roles, marital sexuality, social-relational functioning, and planning joint recreational activities. Realistic expectation and equalitarian roles ranked in the mid-range but remained stable, suggesting sufficient understanding of realistic marital expectations and favorable views regarding equitable role division. Conversely, Personality Issue recorded the lowest mean score, followed by Religious Orientation, Financial Management, Conflict Resolution, and Communication. These results demonstrate the need for improvement in emotional regulation, personal stability, internalized religious values, financial planning, conflict management, and

communication skills. The mean-based findings differ slightly from categorical classification because categorical analysis is frequency-based, whereas mean values reflect sensitivity to score variability. Thus, the mean analysis provides additional insight into underlying strengths and weaknesses.

### 3. Marital Readiness Across Early Adulthood Age Groups



**Figure 2** Marital Readiness Across Early Adulthood Age Groups

The descriptive analysis similar mean readiness scores between the 18–21 age group ( $M = 185.9$ ) and the 22–25 age group ( $M = 185$ ), indicating that chronological age alone did not substantially differentiate marital readiness. Median, mode, and score range were also comparable. However, a violin plot analysis (Figure 2) revealed subtle differences: the 22–25 group exhibited a slightly higher median and a more concentrated distribution, indicating more stable readiness. Meanwhile, the 18–21 group showed a wider spread at lower values, suggesting greater variability. These patterns align with developmental theory stating that individuals in later emerging adulthood tend to exhibit more psychological and social maturity (Erikson, 1968; Arnett, 2000; Santrock, 2018; Hurlock, 2011).

### Discussion

The study revealed that marital readiness among students varied but tended to cluster in the high-readiness categories (Harmonious and Vitalized). This suggests that the majority of students possess foundational interpersonal, emotional, and relational competencies aligned with established marital readiness models (Holman & Busby, 2011; Fowers & Olson, 1992). However, the presence of a notable Traditional subgroup underscores a segment of students who despite positive marital attitudes lack adequate emotional maturity and conflict management skills. This aligns with Rogers (2015) who noted that low personality maturity and emotional instability can hinder readiness for intimate partnerships.

The absence of respondents in the Conflicted category reflects overall positive functioning within the sample. Nevertheless, low-scoring aspects such as Personality Issue, Religious Orientation, Financial Management, Conflict Resolution, and Communication highlight areas where intervention is still needed.

### Relation to Previous Studies

The finding that Personality Issue scored lowest is consistent with Ningrum et al. (2021) who emphasized emotional intelligence as a key predictor of marital readiness. Rogers (2015) also highlighted the detrimental effects of emotional instability, anxiety, and depression on marital preparedness. Low Religious Orientation scores even in a culturally religious region support theories of value shifts among emerging adults Larson & Holman (1994) indicating that religious identity may be culturally present but not fully internalized. Lower Financial Management scores align with literature describing financial conflict as a major marital stressor. Similarly, deficiencies in Conflict Resolution and Communication correspond with findings by Fowers & Olson (1992), who emphasized these skills as core determinants of marital satisfaction. High scores on Equalitarian Roles and Realistic Expectation reflect broader societal trends toward egalitarianism and practical relationship expectations, echoing findings in contemporary marital readiness research.

Alternative explanations need to be considered to keep interpretations within the limits of the research data. One possibility is the difference between cultural religious identity and internalized religiosity. Many students may identify with the religious culture of their environment, but these values have not been fully internalized in their decision-making regarding marriage, which explains the low Religious Orientation scores. This phenomenon is in line with Rogers' (2015) concept of incongruence, which is the mismatch between the ideal self and the actual self. In addition, the high scores on the Sexual Relationship aspect may be influenced by students' exposure to digital information and online sex education, not solely by personal experience. This trend is in line with the findings of Olson & Fowers (1993) which show that modern couples increasingly understand sexual relations as an important part of marital satisfaction. The absence of significant differences

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between age groups can also be explained by the homogeneity of the sample's age. Arnett (2000) states that individuals aged 18–25 are in the emerging adulthood phase with relatively similar psychological development characteristics, so that small age gaps tend not to produce significant differences in readiness for marriage. Thus, this alternative explanation helps to ensure that the interpretation remains within the limits of the available empirical evidence.

The findings of this study have significant practical relevance for the development of counseling services in higher education. The existence of student groups with low levels of readiness, as well as low scores in the areas of emotional regulation, conflict management, financial literacy, and value orientation, indicates the need for structured intervention through classical counseling services. Such interventions can focus on training in emotional regulation and interpersonal communication skills, as emphasized by Rogers (2015) that emotional stability and communication skills are important foundations in building healthy marital relationships. In addition, household financial literacy coaching needs to be strengthened, considering that financial aspects are one of the biggest triggers of conflict in marriage (Fowers & Olson, 1992). Strengthening values regarding relationships and family is also important, in line with the views of Holman & Busby (2011) that strong value orientation contributes to better marriage readiness. Interventions such as premarital counseling have been proven effective in improving the emotional and relational readiness of prospective couples (McGeorge & Carlson, 2006), and this recommendation is in line with the findings of Darajatun (2024) who emphasizes the need for programs to improve marriage readiness on campus. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing responsive and needs based classical counseling programs for students.

### Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that the readiness to marry among university students in Tasikmalaya City varies, reflecting differences in psychological and social maturity among them. The majority of students fall into the harmonious and vitalized categories, which describe adequate emotional readiness, communication skills, and understanding of roles. However, the existence of the traditional group confirms that some students still need strengthening in basic aspects related to emotional management, interpersonal interaction, and self-stability. Consistent weaknesses in the aspects of personality issues, religious orientation, financial management, and communication show that readiness for marriage is not only determined by age or desire, but also by emotional maturity, internalization of values, and practical skills that are not yet fully developed.

Overall, this study is important because it provides an empirical picture of students' readiness to enter marriage in the context of higher education in Indonesia, while reinforcing previous findings that readiness for marriage is a multidimensional construct that requires psychopedagogical intervention. These findings emphasize the relevance of guidance services in higher education as a strategic platform for developing emotional regulation, communication skills, conflict management, and more adaptive financial literacy for students. Thus, this study makes an original contribution by comprehensively mapping aspects of marriage readiness and can serve as a basis for developing preventive and applicable classical counseling programs to support students' transition to a more mature and sustainable married life.

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