The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Anxiety About Marriage Among Young Adults

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Abstract.
The marriage is scary phenomenon that has spread across social media reflects growing worry about married life among young people. Social media exposes users to stories of marital conflict, infidelity, divorce, and domestic violence, which may shape how individuals in early adulthood view marriage. This study examined the relationship between social media use and marriage anxiety in early adulthood using a quantitative correlational design with purposive sampling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 130 participants aged 18 to 29 years who actively use social media. Social media use was measured with a 15-item scale, while marriage anxiety was measured with 15 items selected from the Indonesian adaptation of the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale. Pearson correlation analysis in JASP showed a positive and significant relationship between social media use and marriage anxiety, although the strength of the relationship was weak (r = 0.227; p = 0.009). At the aspect level, social media use was significantly related to restlessness, physiological reactions, and sleep disturbance, but not to general fearfulness. These findings indicate that social media use is one of several factors linked to marriage anxiety. The study implies the need for critical digital literacy and premarital psychological support for young adults.
Keywords: *early adulthood; marriage anxiety; marriage is scary and social media.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of anxiety about marriage among young adults has become a concern as the use of social media has grown, presenting various narratives about marriage and married life. Social media has become a space for individuals to share and obtain information about relationship experiences, ranging from couple conflicts, infidelity, divorce, and domestic violence to traumatic experiences in relationships. One phenomenon gaining traction in the digital space is “marriage is scary,” a topic widely discussed by the younger generation particularly young adults across various social media platforms. This phenomenon reflects the emergence of fear, anxiety, and doubt regarding married life. These concerns may relate to choosing a life partner, uncertainty about the future, the possibility of domestic disputes, economic issues, and exposure to negative narratives about marriage on social media Oktaviani, (2025) .Such exposure can lead some individuals to view marriage as a decision fraught with risks and demands, thereby causing anxiety about making a long-term commitment. Changes in the dynamics of marriage in Indonesia are also evident in the decline in the number of marriages. Data cited from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the number of marriages decreased from 2,016,171 in 2018 to 1,577,255 in 2023 (Siahaan, 2024).

Early adulthood is a developmental phase marked by various demands and important life decisions, including readiness to enter into more serious relationships leading up to marriage. Erikson (1968) explains that individuals in early adulthood face the stage of intimacy versus isolation a phase in which they begin to build close, meaningful, and committed relationships with others (Kemph, (1969) . Success in this stage is linked to the ability to build emotional closeness, while difficulties in forming intimate relationships may be associated with feelings of isolation. In line with this, Arnett, (2000) through the concept of “emerging adulthood,” explains that the 18–29 age range represents a transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, characterized by identity exploration, changes in life circumstances, and the opening up of various possibilities for shaping the future. During this period, individuals begin to face important decisions regarding romantic relationships, partner selection, careers, and their future lives. (Hurlock, 1991) also explains that one of the developmental tasks of early adulthood is choosing a life partner, learning to adapt to a partner, and starting a family. Thus, early adulthood is a relevant group for studying anxiety about marriage because individuals begin to consider their readiness to make long-term commitments and lead a married life.

Anxiety about marriage is a psychological condition characterized by feelings of worry, fear, and doubt that arise when an individual thinks about, considers, plans, or imagines married life (Rahmadia & Rahmah, 2025) . These concerns may relate to choosing a partner, the possibility of conflict, financial circumstances, the division of roles within the family, fear of divorce, and uncertainty about life after marriage. Marriage is not only understood as the union of two individuals but also involves a process of adjusting to differences in background, life principles, habits, and expectations between partners. (Lestari et al., 2024) explain that married life demands maturity, the ability to fulfill responsibilities, and the skill to resolve conflicts constructively. Therefore, marriage can be a source of anxiety, particularly for individuals who feel they are not yet emotionally or mentally prepared to face the dynamics of a long-term relationship. Such anxiety may also be related to family experiences, past romantic relationships, economic circumstances, the social environment, and the information individuals have access to.(Salsabila et al., 2026) discuss various concerns that young adult women have regarding marriage, including the possibility of having a partner with a patriarchal mindset, obstacles to career development after marriage, the risk of infidelity, and doubts about fulfilling their role as a partner. In line with this, (Husnul Hotimah, 2025) explains that concerns about one's partner, the future, domestic issues, financial circumstances, and negative narratives on social media are relevant factors in discussions of anxiety regarding marriage.

In addition to internal factors, advancements in digital technology also serve as a relevant external aspect in understanding individuals' perspectives on marriage. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and X, are not only used as a means of communication but also as spaces to share experiences, build personal identity, and obtain information on various aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships and marriage (Fatahya & Abidin, 2022).(Annur, 2023) reports that 72.6% of Indonesians access information through social media, compared to 60.7% via television and 27.5% via online news portals. These data indicate that social media is one of the most widely used sources of information among the public. Information circulating on social media often stems from users' personal experiences and therefore may not necessarily reflect the full reality. However, the presentation of engaging and repetitive information can influence how individuals understand an issue and shape their perceptions of certain situations. Meili(Meiliandra et al., 2024) explain that social media use and repeated exposure to information may be linked to an individual's vulnerability to anxiety. Thus, social media use is a relevant aspect to study in relation to users' psychological conditions, including anxiety regarding marriage.

In the context of marriage, social media allows individuals to access information about romantic relationships and married life through content that highlights both the positive and negative aspects of marriage. Such content may depict the harmony and romance between partners, but it also includes conflicts, infidelity, domestic violence, divorce, and traumatic experiences within relationships.(Angela et al., 2025) demonstrated that exposure to TikTok content themed "marriage is scary" is associated with the emergence of perceptions and concerns about marriage among Generation Z. These concerns include financial stability, fear of choosing the wrong partner, divorce, infidelity, and domestic violence. (Ardiningrum et al., 2025) also found that exposure to negative content about marriage on TikTok is associated with views that tend to cast doubt on marriage, particularly regarding the possibility of relationship failure, gender inequality, and domestic violence. These findings suggest that digital content depicting negative experiences in marriage provides a relevant context for understanding how individuals perceive and respond to married life.

The "marriage is scary" phenomenon can also be understood through digital narratives that highlight gender role inequality, the risk of relationship failure, and concerns about life after marriage.(Fadilah & Hidayati, 2026) , through their study on the "marriage is scary" phenomenon, analyzed the patriarchal habitus and the reconstruction of marital relationships from a mubadalah perspective. This discussion is relevant to the concerns voiced by some women regarding the possibility of having a patriarchal partner, obstacles to career development after marriage, the risk of infidelity, and the demands of fulfilling the role of a wife. These concerns also align with the discussion by (Salsabila et al., 2026) regarding the anxiety of young adult women when considering marriage. Additionally (Fadilah & Hidayati, 2026) as well as (Saumi et al., 2025) (publication year to be verified) discuss the "marriage is scary" phenomenon in relation to narratives about negative marital experiences circulating in digital spaces. These various narratives can influence the

information individuals receive when forming their views on married life. However, negative views toward marriage and anxiety about marriage are two related but not entirely identical concepts. Exposure to negative content also does not always elicit the same response in every individual. Therefore, the relationship between social media use and anxiety about marriage needs to be empirically examined.

Based on this discussion, previous research has addressed the "marriage is scary" phenomenon, negative perceptions of marriage, and various concerns individuals experience when considering married life. However, the relationship between general social media use and anxiety about marriage among young adults still requires specific examination. Consequently, this study aims to examine the relationship between social media use and anxiety about marriage among young adults aged 18–29. This study is expected to contribute to the fields of developmental psychology and social psychology, particularly in understanding the relationship between social media use and anxiety about marriage among young adults.

II. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative method with a correlational design aimed at testing the relationship between two variables. This study uses purposive sampling, a technique for selecting a sample based on specific criteria or characteristics aligned with the research objectives. This technique was applied to select participants who met the established criteria, ensuring their relevance to the research needs. Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire using Google Forms, which was distributed through social media specifically WhatsApp Stories and WhatsApp chats, including both personal chats, group chats, and WhatsApp Stories. After all the data was collected, the next step was to analyze the research data using JASP version 0.19.3. The respondent criteria included young adults aged 18–29 who actively use social media, both women and men. This age range was chosen because early adulthood is a transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, which generally occurs between the ages of 18 - 29.

The measure of social media use in this study utilized an instrument developed by Salsabila, (2025) In this study, the researcher used 15 items selected from that instrument to measure social media use among the participants. The selection of items was based on the instrument's relevance to the variable under study, namely social media use.The anxiety measurement tool in this study refers to the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (TMAS) developed by Taylor (1953), consisting of 50 items, and adapted into Indonesian by Kurniati & Rozali, (2020) with 44 statements. In this study, the researcher used 15 items selected from this adapted scale to measure anxiety about marriage. The items were selected by considering the relevance of the statement content to the variable under study.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gander	Man	32	24.6
	Woman	98	75.3
Age	18	7	5.3
	19	8	6.1
	20	26	20.0
	21	54	41.5
	22	8	6.1
	23	8	6.1
	24	2	1.5
	25	2	1.5
	26	3	2.3
	27	4	3.0
	28	7	5.3
	29	1	0.7
Time spent on social media	<1 jam	2	1.5
	1-2 jam	26	20.0
	3-4 jam	41	31.5
	5-6 jam	30	23.0
	>6 jam	31	23.8

This study involved 130 respondents. Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, the majority of respondents were female, namely 98 people (75.3%), while 32 were male (24.6%). By age, the respondents were predominantly 21year olds, totaling 54 people (41.5%), followed by 20 year olds, totaling 26 people (20.0%). Based on the duration of social media use, most respondents used social media for 3–4 hours per day, totaling 41 people (31.5%).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Social Media	130	35.938	4.731	23	49
Anxiety about Marriage	130	37.346	10.279	49	59

The study involved 130 respondents. Based on the results of the descriptive statistical analysis, the social media usage variable had a mean score of 35.938 with a standard deviation of 4.731, and a minimum score of 23 and a maximum score of 49. Meanwhile, the variable measuring anxiety about marriage had a mean score of 37.346 with a standard deviation of 10.279, and a minimum score of 49 and a maximum score of 59. These results provide an overview of the trends in mean scores and the variation in scores for both variables among the study's respondents.

Table 3 Normality Test

Variabel	Shapiro-Wilk	P-value
Social Media	0.986	0,206
Anxiety about Marriage	0.983	0,097

A normality test was conducted using the Shapiro–Wilk test to determine whether the research data were normally distributed. Based on the test results, the social media usage variable yielded a Shapiro–Wilk value of 0.986 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.206. Meanwhile, the variable measuring anxiety about marriage yielded a Shapiro–Wilk value of 0.983 with a significance level of 0.097. Both variables had p-values greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the data for both variables did not show a significant deviation from a normal distribution. Thus, the assumption of normality was met for both variables.

Table 4: Correlation Test

Variabel	Pearson'r	p-Value
Social Media		
Anxiety About Marriage	0.227	0,009

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation test between variable X (Social Media) and variable Y (Anxiety About Marriage), a Pearson's r value of 0.227 was obtained with a p-value of 0.009. The Pearson correlation test is used to determine whether or not there is a relationship between two quantitative variables, while the r value is used to assess the direction and strength of the relationship, and the p-value is used to determine the significance of the relationship. An r value of 0.227 indicates that Total MS and Total KM have a positive relationship, meaning that as the Total MS score increases, the Total KM score also tends to increase. Based on the guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients, a value of 0.227 falls into the category of a weak relationship. Meanwhile, the p-value of 0.009 which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship albeit a weak one between variable X (Social Media) and variable Y (Marriage Anxiety), as analysis was conducted on each aspect of marriage anxiety to examine the relationship in greater detail. The results show that social media is positively and significantly correlated with Aspect 1, namely feeling restless when things do not go as expected / anxiety ($p = 0.002$), Aspect 2, namely physical symptoms or physiological reactions ($p = 0.003$), and Aspect 4, namely difficulty sleeping, heart palpitations, and nightmares ($p = 0.012$). Conversely, Aspect 3 feeling afraid of many things did not show a significant correlation with social media ($p = 0.200$). Thus, the overall significant relationship stems primarily from Aspects 1, 2, and 4, while Aspect 3 did not show a significant relationship.

The results of this study indicate that social media use is positively and significantly associated with anxiety about marriage among young adults($r = 0.227$ $p = 0.009$; $p < 0.05$). This means that individuals with higher social media use scores tend to have higher scores of anxiety about marriage as well. However, the strength of the relationship between the two variables is relatively weak. To examine the relationship in greater detail, an analysis was conducted on each aspect of marriage anxiety. The results showed that social media

was positively and significantly correlated with Aspect 1 (feeling restless when things do not go as expected), Aspect 2 (physical symptoms or physiological reactions), and Aspect 4 (difficulty sleeping, heart palpitations, and nightmares). Conversely, Aspect 3 (fear of many things) did not show a significant correlation with social media. Thus, the significant relationships primarily stem from Aspects 1, 2, and 4, while Aspect 3 did not show a meaningful relationship. These findings can be explained through Arnett, (2000) concept of "emerging adulthood developmental stage during which individuals explore their identity, interpersonal relationships, and future possibilities. At this stage, marriage begins to be one of the things considered by early adults. Social media can serve as a source of information about married life through the various experiences and stories shared by its users. Exposure to content such as domestic conflicts, infidelity, divorce, and financial problems may influence how individuals view marriage.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the data analysis indicate that social media use has a positive and significant relationship with anxiety about marriage among young adults; thus, the research hypothesis is supported, with the direction of the relationship a positive correlation showing that the higher the level of social media use, the higher the level of anxiety about marriage experienced by individuals. However, the relationship between these two variables shows a weak correlation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.227. This relationship is primarily evident in the aspects of restlessness, physiological reactions, and sleep disturbances, whereas the aspect of fear of many things does not show a significant relationship. Thus, social media use can more accurately be understood as one of the factors associated with anxiety about marriage.

Young adults are advised to be more selective and critical when consuming content about marriage on social media and to understand that the experiences shared by other users do not necessarily reflect the full reality of marriage. Counselors, psychologists, and educational institutions can use these findings to develop digital literacy and premarital education programs that help young adults manage anxiety in an adaptive manner. Future research is recommended to include a more balanced sample size so that the results can provide a more comprehensive picture of the population in terms of gender and age; to use measurement tools specifically designed to assess anxiety about marriage; and to measure exposure to "marriage is scary" content more specifically. Future research could also examine other variables, such as parental divorce, emotional maturity, social support, and readiness for marriage, or employ a longitudinal design to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics between these variables.

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