The Role of Marital Attitudes in Predicting Life Satisfaction Across Generations

Herwandha KG, Ginanjar, AS.

Universitas Indonesia, Depok

Abstract:

Statement of the Problem: Previous studies showed that marriage delay has become a common phenomenon in recent years, raising questions about whether shifting views on marriage continue to influence life satisfaction across generations. This issue is particularly important to investigate with mental health, as life satisfaction is closely linked to psychological well-being. Changes in marital expectations and delayed marriage may contribute to increased stress, loneliness, and uncertainty, potentially affecting individuals' emotional resilience and overall mental health. Identifying these dynamics can help in developing mental health interventions that promote well-being for individuals navigating evolving societal expectations surrounding marriage. Therefore, this study examined the role of marital attitudes in shaping life satisfaction among Millennials and Gen Z.

Methodology and Theoretical Orientation: Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted on data from an online survey of 557 participants (M_{age} = 29, SD_{age} = 4.96; Female = 77.2%; Millennials = 57.6%). A subjective well-being framework was utilized to examine the relationship between marital attitudes and life satisfaction, focusing on how individuals cognitively evaluate their overall happiness and fulfillment.

Findings: Marital attitude significantly predicted life satisfaction after controlling for generations (R^2 change = 0.0274; $p < 0.001$). Simultaneously, marital attitudes and generational differences contribute 17.4% to life satisfaction. Independent samples t-tests revealed that Millennials scored significantly higher on marital attitudes (Cohen's $d = 0.270$; $p < 0.002$) and life satisfaction (Cohen's $d = 0.444$; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: This study provides empirical evidence that marriage continues to play a role in predicting life satisfaction across generations. While the effect size for marital attitudes is small, the effect size for life satisfaction is moderate, suggesting that generational differences play a meaningful role in these variables. The findings highlight those marital attitudes and generational factors are linked to overall well-being, especially life satisfaction in the modern era. Given the evolving societal expectations surrounding marriage, these insights underscore the importance of developing mental health interventions and support systems to promote psychological well-being across generations.

Biography

Karenina G. Herwandha is a post graduate student in personality psychology from University of Indonesia. She wrote a dissertation on "Attachment and Age As Predictors of the Emotional Maturity of University Students," which was also published as proceedings in KnE Social Sciences. She is also interested in the field of developmental psychology, contributing as a co-author in a book with chapters on "Detection of Conduct Disorder in Middle Childhood" and "Early Childhood Language Development in Bilingual Families," published by the Faculty of Psychology at State University of Malang. Additionally, she authored the "Initial Interview for Children with Sexual Harassment" module for the National Commission for Child Protection. Currently, she is focusing on relationship and family topics, with her dissertation exploring the subject of sexting.

About Research Topic

A pilot study with 221 respondents showed that 65% delayed marriage, citing financial anxiety, changing marital attitudes, and fear of marriage as key reasons. These findings highlight the importance of examining evolving marital attitudes, as negative beliefs about marriage can reduce relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability, ultimately harming subjective well-being. Such attitudes, shaped by personal, cultural, and generational influences, contribute to life dissatisfaction, emotional distress, and poorer mental health, with life satisfaction being closely linked to marital quality and status.

About Institution:

The Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia (UI), established in 1960, is a leading institution in psychological research and education in Indonesia. As part of Universitas Indonesia, a top research university in Southeast Asia, the Faculty fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and contributes to evidence-based practices. It includes research groups such as the Family Studies Research Group, focusing on family dynamics, marital relationships, and intergenerational influences. The Faculty plays a key role in advancing psychological knowledge and addressing mental health challenges, shaping the future of psychology through research, academic programs, and community impact.

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