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The 'Marriage is Scary' Phenomenon Among the Younger Generation: An Analysis from the Perspective of Islamic Law (Maqashid al-Shari'ah)

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Abstract

The phenomenon widely known as "marriage is scary" has become increasingly visible among Indonesia's young generation, characterized by a steady decline in the marriage rate, delayed marital age, and the proliferation of anti-marriage narratives across digital platforms. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) recorded a decline of nearly 30% in the number of registered marriages between 2013 and 2023, while a 2024 survey by IDN Research Institute and Katadata Insight Center found that a considerable share of Generation Z expresses hesitation toward marriage, driven by economic pressure, psychological trauma, unrealistic social expectations, and negative narratives circulating on social media. This study analyzes the "marriage is scary" phenomenon through the lens of Islamic law, specifically employing the framework of maqashid al-shari'ah (the higher objectives of Islamic law), to trace its underlying causes and formulate normative solutions. Using a qualitative, library-based normative-juridical method, this research examines relevant verses of the Qur'an, prophetic traditions (hadith), and the opinions of classical and contemporary Muslim jurists. The findings show that the fear of marriage among young people intersects with all six dimensions of maqashid al-shari'ah, namely the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, property, and honor, and that Islamic law offers not merely normative obligation but a framework of gradual readiness, economic ease, and pre-marital guidance capable of mitigating such anxiety. This study contributes to the growing discourse on contemporary Islamic family law by situating a viral socio-digital phenomenon within a systematic maqashid-based analysis, offering theoretical enrichment and practical recommendations for religious and educational institutions in responding to shifting marital attitudes among the younger generation.

Keywords

Family Law; Generation Z; Maqashid Syariah; Marriage Anxiety; Social Media.

Introduction

Ces dernières années, le discours selon lequel « le mariage fait peur » a fait l'objet de nombreuses discussions sur diverses plateformes de réseaux sociaux parmi la jeunesse indonésienne, en particulier la génération Z et les milléniaux de la fin de la génération. Cette expression traduit les inquiétudes, les doutes, voire les craintes face au mariage, autrefois

considéré comme une étape naturelle et attendue de la vie. Ce phénomène ne se limite pas à une simple tendance linguistique, mais reflète un changement de perspective de la jeune génération vis-à-vis de l'institution du mariage elle-même (Karmila, 2026 ; Meilisa & Latief, 2025). Les contenus sur le thème « marriage is scary », qui mettent en scène des histoires de couples en difficulté, le poids économique du mariage ou encore des traumatismes familiaux, sont rapidement devenus viraux et ont contribué à forger une perception collective selon laquelle le mariage est un risque majeur qu'il convient d'éviter ou, à tout le moins, de reporter (Azizah, 2026 ; Tirta & Arifin, 2025).

Quantitative data reinforces this picture. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded a decline in the number of marriages registered nationwide from 2.21 million in 2013 to just 1.57 million in 2023, equivalent to a fall of around 30 per cent over the course of a decade (Central Statistics Agency, 2024). At the same time, a survey conducted by the IDN Research Institute in collaboration with the Katadata Insight Centre (2024) on Indonesia's Generation Z found that whilst the majority (73.7 per cent) are still willing to consider marriage, most of them view marriage as a choice that requires careful consideration, rather than a social obligation that must be fulfilled immediately; whilst 21.2 per cent stated they 'might' get married, and 5.3 per cent stated categorically that they had no interest in marriage at all. These figures coincide with a rise in divorce rates, from 324,000 cases in 2013 to 463,000 cases in 2023 (Directorate General of the Religious Courts, Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024), which further reinforces the negative perception of marriage amongst the younger generation.

Various previous studies have identified a number of factors underlying the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon, including economic pressures and the high cost of marriage (Satriyanto & Oktaviani, 2025; Bukhari & Arifin, 2025), family trauma and experiences of a broken home during childhood (Zahra et al., 2026), the influence of negative narratives on social media (Azizah, 2026; Meilisa & Latief, 2025), and socio-cultural pressures relating to gender roles within the household (Karmila, 2026; Tirta & Arifin, 2025). Although these studies have mapped this phenomenon from psychological, sociological and communication perspectives, the majority have not yet placed it within a comprehensive framework of Islamic law, even though, from an Islamic perspective, marriage is not merely a social institution but rather part of the *maqashid al-shari'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law), which concern the preservation of religion, life, reason, lineage, property and human dignity (Auda, 2008; Ibn 'Asyur, 2001).

Islam regards marriage as a solemn and serious covenant, as Allah SWT

emphasises in the Qur'an: "And how are you to take them back, when some of you have already consummated marriage with others, and they (your wives) have taken a solemn pledge (*mitsaqan ghalizhan*) from you?." (QS. An-Nisa [4]: 21)

This verse emphasises that the marriage contract is a '*mitsaqan ghalizhan*', a solemn and binding covenant, on a par with the covenants made by the prophets with Allah (Ahmad et al., 2025). This 'seriousness' should not be understood as a daunting burden, but rather as an affirmation that marriage is indeed something that deserves to be prepared for earnestly, not avoided. The phenomenon of 'marriage is scary' therefore needs to be reinterpreted: rather than merely a symptom of reluctance, it can also be understood as a form of caution on the part of the younger generation in responding to the weighty consequences of the *mitsaqan ghalizhan*, although there are also many cases where this leads to total avoidance or even a permanent 'childfree' outlook that runs counter to the *maqashid* of Sharia (Rosyad & Sunarto, 2026).

Another factor that underscores the urgency of this study is the algorithmic nature of social media platforms, which tend to amplify emotional and sensational content, including stories of troubled marriages that are subsequently labelled as typical representations of marriage (Meilisa & Latief, 2025). Consequently, young people who are repeatedly exposed to such narratives are at risk of experiencing a distortion of perception, whereby extreme cases—which do not in fact represent the majority of domestic experiences—are perceived as the norm or even as a high probability of what they will experience. Within the framework of *hifz al-'aql*, this phenomenon is crucial to examine, as the formation of erroneous opinions regarding the institution of marriage may, in turn, influence life decisions that should be based on comprehensive and proportionate considerations, rather than solely on the bias of digital exposure.

Based on the above discussion, this article aims to answer three key questions: first, what factors have led to the emergence of the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon amongst Indonesia's younger generation; secondly, how can this phenomenon be analysed through the framework of *maqashid al-shari'ah*; and thirdly, what normative solutions can Islamic law offer to address the younger generation's concerns regarding marriage without compromising the objectives of *shari'ah* in the formation of the family. The objective of this research is to analyse this phenomenon comprehensively through the *maqashid al-shari'ah* approach, whilst also making an academic contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic family law that is responsive to the social dynamics of the younger

generation.

This study seeks to strike a balance between a normative theoretical framework and the practical realities faced by today's younger generation, in the hope that the findings will provide input to religious and educational institutions, as well as policymakers, in formulating a more humanistic and practical approach to the issue of readiness for marriage.

It should also be emphasised that the phenomenon of the younger generation's reluctance to marry is not merely a local Indonesian phenomenon, but rather part of a broader global trend, as reflected in various reports by international survey organisations regarding the postponement of marriage and the declining interest in starting a family amongst the world's younger generation. Nevertheless, the normative response to this phenomenon will depend heavily on the value framework embraced by the local community. For Indonesian Muslims, who regard Islamic law as one of the primary references in family life, interpreting the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon through the framework of *maqashid al-shari'ah* is both relevant and urgent, given that this framework not only highlights the aspect of normative compliance, but also takes into account the real welfare concerns faced by the younger generation within their current social, economic and psychological contexts.

Method

This study employs a normative legal research method (juridical-normative) with a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach. The primary data sources in this study are verses from the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) relevant to the theme of marriage, as well as the writings of classical scholars, namely Imam al-Ghazali in **Al-Mustashfa min 'Ilm al-Ushul** (al-Ghazali, 1997) and Imam al-Shatibi in **Al-Muwafaqat fi Ushul al-Syari'ah** (Asy-Syatibi, 1997), as well as the works of contemporary scholars Ibn 'Asyur in **Maqashid al-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah** (Ibn 'Asyur, 2001) and Jasser Auda in **Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach** (Auda, 2008). Secondary data was obtained from the results of previous research on the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon, demographic and marriage statistics from the Central Statistics Agency, survey results from the IDN Research Institute and the Katadata Insight Centre, as well as the annual reports of the Directorate General of Religious Courts of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia.

Data collection was carried out through library research, namely by searching for, gathering and examining documents, scientific journals, classical texts and official reports relevant to the subject of study. Data analysis was carried out using a descriptive-analytical approach with content analysis techniques, which were then integrated with the

maqashid al-sharia system approach as proposed by Jasser Auda (2008), encompassing six characteristics, namely cognition, wholeness, openness, interrelated hierarchy, multidimensionality, and purposefulness. Through this approach, the sociological and psychological factors underpinning the ‘marriage is scary’ phenomenon were mapped onto the six dimensions of maqashid al-shari’ah, namely hifz al-din (preservation of religion), hifz al-nafs (preservation of life), hifz al-‘aql (preservation of reason), hifz al-nasl (preservation of progeny), hifz al-mal (preservation of wealth), and hifz al-‘irdh (preservation of honour). The results of this mapping were subsequently analysed using a triangulation approach, bringing together the nash (verses and hadiths), the opinions of scholars, and contemporary empirical data to produce comprehensive and practical conclusions.

To ensure the reliability of the data, this study undertook several verification steps. Firstly, all quotations from the Qur’an were cross-referenced with the standard mushaf and authoritative exegetical works to ensure the accuracy of the text and the context of its revelation. Secondly, each hadith quoted is accompanied by information regarding the narrators and, where available, its status of authenticity, including differences of opinion amongst hadith scholars where there are disputed accounts regarding the degree of authenticity. Thirdly, statistical data and contemporary survey results are sourced directly from the official publishers—namely the Central Statistics Agency, the IDN Research Institute, the Katadata Insight Centre, and the Directorate General of Religious Courts of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia—to avoid the distortion caused by secondary citations, which is common in issues that go viral on social media. Through these three verification steps, this study seeks to bridge the tension between the depth of religious norms and the accuracy of contemporary empirical data.

Result

Based on a literature review, this study identifies four main categories of factors underlying the phenomenon of ‘fear of marriage’ amongst Indonesian youth, namely: (1) economic factors, in particular the high cost of marriage (dowry, reception and accommodation) as well as the economic uncertainty faced by young people due to rising prices of basic necessities (Bukhari & Arifin, 2025; Satriyanto & Oktaviani, 2025); (2) psychological factors, notably family trauma, the experience of a broken home and concerns regarding the mental preparation required to take on the responsibilities of running a household (Zahra et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2024); (3) socio-cultural factors, including pressure relating to gender roles, unrealistic societal expectations, and a shift in values towards individualism amongst the younger generation (Karmila, 2026; Meilisa & Latief, 2025); and (4) digital factors, notably exposure to negative content regarding troubled households on social media, which shapes a biased

perception of marriage as a whole (Azizah, 2026; Tirta & Arifin, 2025).

When analysed in the light of the maqashid al-shari'ah framework, these four categories are not independent of one another, but are interdependent and overlap with several dimensions of the maqashid at the same time, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Correspondence between the factors of the 'Marriage is Scary' phenomenon and the dimensions of the Maqashid al-Shari'ah

No	Causes	Overlapping Dimensions of Maqashid	Brief Explanation
1	Economics (wedding costs, financial uncertainty)	Hifz al-Mal; Hifz al-Nafs	Financial worries lead to delays in marriage and put psychological pressure on couples
2	Psychological (Family Trauma, mental preparedness)	Hifz al-Nafs; Hifz al-'Aql	Mental unpreparedness is directly linked to the nurturing of the soul and intellectual maturity (rusyd)
3	Socio-cultural (gender roles, societal expectations)	Hifz al-'Irdh; Hifz al-Din	Social pressure influences attitudes towards self-respect and religious values within the family
4	Digital (negative social media narratives)	Hifz al-'Aql; Hifz al-Din	Exposure to biased information has the potential to distort religious thinking and understanding regarding marriage
5	Indefinite postponement / permanent child-free lifestyle	Hifz al-Nasl	Directly related to the preservation of the lineage and the continuity of future generations

Source: Compiled by the author from various previous studies (2026).

Table 1 shows that all the factors contributing to the ‘marriage is scary’ phenomenon essentially intersect with the six dimensions of maqashid al-shari’ah, albeit to varying degrees. Economic and psychological factors have featured most frequently in previous research and are directly linked to hifz al-mal, hifz al-nafs and hifz al-’aql, whilst socio-cultural and digital factors are more closely associated with hifz al-’irdh and hifz al-din. As for the long-term impacts, such as indefinite postponement of marriage or the decision to remain childfree permanently, these are directly linked to hifz al-nasl. These findings confirm that the ‘marriage is scary’ phenomenon is not a single symptom that can be reduced to just one factor, but rather a multidimensional issue requiring a similarly multidimensional response, in line with the nature of the maqashid sharia system proposed by Jasser Auda (2008). A more detailed discussion of the relationship between each factor and each dimension of maqashid is presented in the Discussion section.

Another finding of equal importance is the difference in the intensity of anxiety between young people in urban and rural areas, as indirectly touched upon by Satriyanto and Oktaviani (2025) in the context of Serang Baru Sub-district, Bekasi, where the pressures of the urban cost of living and more intense exposure to social media contribute to amplifying young people’s concerns about marriage compared to areas where a strong social structure still underpins the extended family institution. Furthermore, a pattern has also been identified whereby the ‘marriage is scary’ phenomenon does not always result in an outright rejection of marriage, but more often manifests as a delay and far stricter partner selection, as found by Azizah (2026) and Karmila (2026). This pattern indicates that what the younger generation is actually concerned about is not marriage itself as an institution, but rather the risk of failure and a lack of readiness to undertake it, an important nuance that will be explored in greater depth through the framework of maqashid al-shari’ah in the Discussion section below.

Discussion

This section explores in greater depth how the phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’ intersects with the six dimensions of maqashid al-shari’ah, whilst offering a normative interpretation of authoritative Islamic sources—namely the Qur’an, the hadith and the opinions of scholars—as a framework for addressing the younger generation’s concerns about marriage.

Hifz al-Din (Religious Practice)

In Islam, marriage is not merely a social event, but rather a form of worship and a means of perfecting one’s faith. There is a well-known hadith narrated by Al-Baihaqi in Syu’ab al-Iman: "When a servant of

Allah marries, he has indeed fulfilled half of his religion; let him therefore fear Allah regarding the remaining half." (HR. Al-Baihaqi, Syu'ab al-Iman)

Some hadith scholars consider the isnad of this narration to be not entirely sound, although its meaning is supported by various other authentic texts concerning the virtues of marriage. Regardless of the debate over the status of the chain of transmission, the essence of this hadith is in line with Allah's command in Surah An-Nur [24]: 32: "And marry those amongst you who are single, and also the righteous amongst your male and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will provide for them through His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing (in His bounty), All-Knowing." (Surah An-Nur [24]: 32)

This verse explicitly addresses the financial concerns that are one of the dominant factors behind the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon, by promising Allah's assistance to those who marry under limited circumstances. From the perspective of *hifz al-din*, a prolonged reluctance to marry without a sharia-based reason has the potential to distance a person from one of the forms of perfecting their worship, whilst simultaneously opening the door to behaviour that contradicts religious values, such as extramarital relationships, which are now becoming increasingly prevalent alongside the postponement of marriage (Ahmad et al., 2025).

***Hifz al-Nafs* (Nurturing the Soul)**

The narrative that 'marriage is scary' is generally based on the assumption that marriage is a source of psychological stress. In fact, the Qur'an positions marriage as a source of inner peace, as Allah states in Surah Ar-Rum [30]: 21: "And amongst His signs is that He created mates for you from amongst yourselves, so that you may find tranquillity (*sakinah*) in them, and He has placed between you affection (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*). Truly, in that are signs (of Allah's greatness) for people who reflect." (Surah Ar-Rum [30]: 21)

The concepts of *sakinah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah* in this verse stand in direct contrast to the 'frightening' narrative often associated with marriage in the digital sphere. The problem does not lie with the institution of marriage itself, but rather in psychological unpreparedness and the wrong choice of partner, both of which can in fact be minimised through adequate pre-marital education and guidance (Aini et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). From the perspective of *hifz al-nafs*, it is important for the younger generation to understand that peace of mind in marriage is

not something that comes automatically, but rather the result of mutual readiness and joint effort between husband and wife.

Concerns regarding domestic trauma, as identified by Zahra et al. (2026) as one of the dominant factors behind the phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’, have in fact also been anticipated by the principle: ‘There must be no harm (inflicted upon oneself) and there must be no harm (inflicted upon others).’ (Narrated by Ibn Majah and Ahmad; this is also a fundamental principle of Islamic jurisprudence)

This principle forms the basis for various protective provisions in Islamic family law, including the right to fasakh (annulment of marriage) and the right to seek a divorce by petition (khulu’) for the aggrieved party, so that the younger generation’s concerns regarding the risk of marital breakdown should be addressed not by avoiding marriage, but by recognising that Islam has provided legal instruments to prevent and address harm (dharar) within the family, including through pre-marital counselling that equips prospective couples with communication and conflict resolution skills (Aini et al., 2024).

Hifz al-'Aql (Cultivating the Mind)

The dimension of hifz al-'aql in the context of marriage is closely linked to the concept of intellectual maturity (rusyd) as a prerequisite for readiness to marry. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim: “O young men, whoever amongst you is able (ba’ah), let him marry, for marriage is more likely to lower the gaze and guard one’s chastity. And whoever is not yet able, let him fast, for fasting is a shield for him.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The key term in this hadith is istitha’ah (capability), which the scholars do not interpret narrowly as mere biological capability, but rather as encompassing overall readiness: mental, financial and social (Esse et al., 2026). The phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’ can essentially be interpreted as a response from the younger generation who, indirectly, are assessing their own istitha’ah before taking the step towards marriage. This kind of caution should be channelled constructively, rather than being allowed to develop into a permanent reluctance that is counterproductive to the aims of Islamic law.

In line with the concept of istitha’ah, the majority (jumhur) of classical jurists across the various schools of thought classify the ruling on marriage into several categories depending on the individual’s circumstances and readiness: it is obligatory for those who are capable

and fear they may fall into adultery if they do not marry immediately; it is *sunnah* (recommended) for those who are capable but are not in a state of urgency; *mubah* (permissible) for those who do not yet have such a strong inclination or such concerns; and *makruh* or even *haram* for those who marry in circumstances where it is clear they will wrong their partner due to a demonstrable inability. This tiered legal classification demonstrates that Islam has, in fact, provided scope for caution and careful consideration before marriage; thus, the concerns of the younger generation arising from the phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’ should be addressed through an honest and gradual process of assessing one’s *istitha’ah*, rather than by an absolute avoidance of marriage or, conversely, by forcing oneself into marriage without adequate preparation.

***Hifz al-Nasl* (Preservation of the Lineage)**

A prolonged postponement of marriage, particularly when accompanied by a permanent childfree lifestyle without a sharia-based justification, directly conflicts with *hifz al-nasl*. Allah states in Surah Adz-Dzariyat [51]: 49: “And We have created everything in pairs so that you may remember (the greatness of Allah).” (Surah Adz-Dzariyat [51]: 49)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also encouraged the selection of a partner with the potential to bear children as a source of pride for the ummah, as stated in his hadith narrated by Abu Dawud and An-Nasa’i: “Marry a woman who is loving and fertile (with the potential for many children), for indeed I shall take pride in your great numbers before other nations (on the Day of Judgement).” (Narrated by Abu Dawud and An-Nasa’i).

Rosyad and Sunarto (2026) assert that a permanent refusal to have children without a reason justified by Sharia (such as urgent health or welfare concerns) runs counter to the *maqashid*, as the continuity of generations is one of the primary objectives of Sharia that underpins the existence of humanity as a whole. The phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’, when it leads to indefinite postponement or a permanent refusal to marry and have children, has the potential to upset the balance between the individual’s right to make life choices and the collective responsibility to ensure the continuity of future generations.

It is important to emphasise that postponing marriage (*ta’khir al-zawaj*) is not, in itself, strictly prohibited under Islamic jurisprudence, provided it remains within reasonable limits and is based on justifiable reasons, such as completing one’s education, establishing a reasonable level of financial

stability, or seeking a partner who is truly suqufu (equal) in terms of religion and moral character. The issue within the framework of hifz al-nasl is not the postponement itself, but rather when the postponement turns into a permanent reluctance without any time limit or clear justification, thereby cumulatively contributing to a decline in marriage and birth rates at the wider societal level, as illustrated by the BPS data presented in the Introduction. This nuanced distinction is important to ensure that the maqashid framework is not misused to stigmatise young people who are preparing themselves responsibly, but is instead directed at criticising a permanent avoidance of marriage that is not grounded in sharia-based reasons.

Hifz al-Mal (Asset Management)

Economic factors are one of the most dominant causes of the ‘marriage is scary’ phenomenon (Bukhari & Arifin, 2025; Satriyanto & Oktaviani, 2025). Islam has, in fact, anticipated these concerns through the principle of ease (taysir) regarding the dowry and wedding expenses. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, as narrated by Al-Baihaqi and deemed authentic by Al-Hakim according to the criteria of Imam Muslim: “Verily, amongst women, those who are most blessed are those whose dowry is the lightest (easiest).” (Narrated by Al-Baihaqi; deemed authentic by Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak)

This principle, when applied more broadly, is also relevant to the costs of wedding receptions and the entire wedding process, which in contemporary society are often burdened by expectations of luxury and social prestige that far exceed the guidance of Islamic law (Bukhari & Arifin, 2025). Returning to Surah An-Nur [24]:32, mentioned earlier, Allah’s assurance to provide sufficient sustenance for those who marry within financial constraints should serve as a spiritual foundation for the younger generation not to postpone marriage solely out of economic concerns, whilst not neglecting the importance of reasonable and proportionate financial preparedness.

This principle of ease is, in fact, one of the fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), as set out in Majallat al-Ahkam al-’Adliyyah, Article 17: “Hardship brings ease.” (Principle of Islamic Jurisprudence, Majallat al-Ahkam al-’Adliyyah, Article 17) This principle affirms that whenever a matter is deemed burdensome, Islamic law provides for proportionate relief; thus, the financial concerns underlying the phenomenon of ‘marriage is scary’ should be addressed by seeking forms of relief permitted under Islamic law, for example, through a modest

dowry and a simple wedding reception, rather than by avoiding marriage altogether.

***Hifz al-'Irdh* (Upholding Honour)**

This sixth dimension, added by Ibn 'Asyur, highlights how marriage serves to protect the honour of both the individual and the family from slander and negative public perception (Ibn 'Asyur, 2001; Harun et al., 2025). In the context of the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon, socio-cultural pressures relating to gender role expectations within the household, as identified by Karmila (2026), may actually come to threaten hifz al-'irdh itself if the younger generation chooses to avoid marriage whilst continuing to engage in relationships that are not legally bound. Harun, Marjohan, and Syarif (2025) emphasise that strengthening the principle of hifz al-'irdh through a robust family institution can mitigate various contemporary social issues, including rising divorce rates and extramarital relationships, so that a well-prepared marriage actually serves as a protector of honour, rather than a threat to it.

Within the framework of fiqh, the mechanisms of ta'aruf (getting to know one another) and khitbah (engagement), which are prescribed prior to the marriage contract, are in fact designed to address the concerns of the younger generation without compromising hifz al-'irdh. Through an open ta'aruf process supervised by family or guardians, prospective partners are given sufficient space to get to know each other's character, life vision and readiness in a gradual and respectful manner, before both decide to marry. This mechanism, if optimised in a more contextually appropriate manner to meet the needs of today's younger generation, for example through the guidance of family counsellors or religious advisers during the ta'aruf stage, has the potential to address some of the concerns underlying the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon, particularly concerns about incompatibility or doubts regarding the quality of the relationship, as identified by Azizah (2026), without having to compromise the prudence or honour of either party.

Contributions and Normative Recommendations

Based on an analysis of these six dimensions of maqashid al-shari'ah, this study offers several normative and practical recommendations. Firstly, the strengthening of pre-marital counselling based on the maqashid al-shari'ah, which not only conveys the fiqh of marriage in a textual manner but also equips prospective spouses with psychological, financial and

communication readiness (Aini et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). Secondly, collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Office of Religious Affairs, educational institutions, and digital content creators to present a more balanced counter-narrative regarding marriage in the digital sphere, in response to the dominance of negative narratives identified by Meilisa and Latief (2025) and Azizah (2026). Thirdly, the simplification of the dowry and wedding reception costs as a tangible manifestation of the principle of taysir, in line with the spirit of the hadith regarding the blessings of a modest dowry. Fourthly, strengthening literacy in the maqashid al-shari'ah within the religious education curriculum, so that the younger generation understands marriage not as a daunting burden, but as a means of fulfilling all six dimensions of the maqashid simultaneously: religion, the soul, reason, progeny, wealth, and honour. Through these four steps, Islamic law does not present itself as a coercive authority, but rather as an ethical and normative framework that helps the younger generation to assess their readiness in a more holistic and proportionate manner.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Agenda

This study is not without a number of limitations that must be honestly acknowledged. Firstly, as a library-based study, this research does not involve the direct collection of primary data from young people through interviews or surveys; consequently, the identification of the factors causing the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon relies entirely on the findings of previous studies, the scope of which remains limited to certain regions and age groups in Indonesia. Secondly, the maqashid al-sharia approach employed, whilst comprehensive in covering six dimensions, remains just one of several analytical frameworks that could be applied to this phenomenon; other approaches, such as comparative fiqh of the schools of thought (muqaranah al-madzahib) or the sociological study of Islamic law, could provide additional perspectives that complement the findings of this study. Thirdly, the dynamics of the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon on social media evolve very rapidly; consequently, the data and figures cited in this study need to be updated regularly in subsequent research. In light of these limitations, future research is advised to supplement this study with quantitative and qualitative primary data from young Indonesians across different regions, as well as to empirically test the effectiveness of the maqashid sharia-based premarital counselling recommendations proposed by this study in the field.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of 'marriage is scary' amongst the younger generation is essentially not merely a temporary trend in popular culture, but rather an

indicator of a shift in values that requires a serious response within a comprehensive framework of Islamic law. An analysis using the maqashid al-shari'ah approach shows that the younger generation's concerns regarding marriage intersect with all dimensions of the objectives of Islamic law, ranging from the preservation of religion, life, reason, lineage, wealth, to honour; consequently, these concerns cannot be reduced to a single cause nor resolved by a single solution. Islamic law, in this regard, does not position marriage as a rigid and daunting obligation, but rather offers a framework of flexibility, gradual readiness, and pre-marital guidance capable of alleviating these concerns without sacrificing the noble objectives of family formation. This research contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic family law discourse by bridging viral social-digital phenomena with both classical and contemporary maqashid theoretical frameworks, whilst recommending the strengthening of maqashid-based pre-marital guidance, more balanced digital narratives, and the reduction of wedding costs as concrete steps that can be taken by religious and educational institutions, as well as policymakers, in responding to the evolving perspectives of the younger generation on marriage.

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