

---

**Making Sense of Marriage-Related Fear: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Emerging Adult Women in Pakistan**

**Umbreen Minahil<sup>\*1</sup>, Lyla Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Arif<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>\*1</sup> BS, Department of Social Sciences, Superior University Lahore. \*Umbreenminahil@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, Superior University Lahore. Lyla.hassan.sgd@superior.edu.pk

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Department of Computer Science and Information Technology, Superior University Lahore. Md.arif@superior.edu.pk

**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i2.2225>**

**Abstract**

The present study explored the lived experiences of fear of marriage among emerging adult women in Pakistan. Although marriage is considered an important social institution in Pakistani society, many young women experience fear and anxiety related to marriage. However, this phenomenon has received limited attention in Pakistani psychological research. A qualitative research design based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to understand how women experience and make sense of this fear. Seven unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 29 participated in semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using IPA to identify common patterns and meanings across participants' experiences. Five major themes emerged from the analysis: fear shaped by negative relationship experiences and observed unhappy marriages, concerns about losing identity and independence, pressure from social and cultural expectations, physical and emotional experiences of fear, and feelings of silence and lack of support. The findings suggest that fear of marriage is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and cultural factors. The study supports the Biopsychosocial Model and Emerging Adulthood Theory by showing how personal development, family experiences, and societal expectations interact to shape women's fears about marriage. The study provides a culturally relevant understanding of fear of marriage and highlights the need for counselling services and mental health support for young women in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Fear of Marriage, Gamophobia, Emerging Adult Women, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

**Introduction**

Marriage is considered one of the most important social institutions across cultures and plays a significant role in shaping personal, family, and social life. While marriage is often associated with companionship, emotional support, and social stability, recent research suggests that many young adults, particularly women, experience considerable fear and anxiety regarding marriage and long-term commitment. This phenomenon, commonly known as gamophobia or fear of marriage, has gained increasing attention in psychological research because of its impact on mental well-being, interpersonal relationships, and life decisions (Chang, 2024; Safiudin, 2024; Jarwan & Abu-Al-Rub, 2024).

Fear of marriage refers to a persistent and intense anxiety related to entering a marital relationship or making a long-term commitment. Unlike normal pre-marital nervousness, which is usually temporary and situation-specific, fear of marriage is characterized by ongoing worry, avoidance behaviors, and emotional

distress that may interfere with an individual's daily functioning and relationship development (Psychology Today, 2025; Tabkhi et al., 2025). Individuals experiencing this fear may avoid discussions about marriage, delay relationship commitments, or experience significant psychological discomfort when confronted with marriage-related expectations.

Recent literature has also highlighted the role of media exposure and social comparison in shaping young women's perceptions of marriage. Continuous exposure to idealized relationships on social media platforms may create unrealistic expectations about marital life, while also increasing fear of failure and dissatisfaction. This constant comparison between real-life experiences and idealized representations may contribute to anxiety about long-term commitment and hesitation toward marriage decisions among emerging adults (Stanley et al., 2006; Willoughby et al., 2013)

In Pakistan, marriage holds strong cultural, social, and religious significance. It is often viewed not only as a personal choice but also as a family and societal responsibility. Women, in particular, frequently experience social expectations regarding marriage, family formation, and traditional gender roles. While these expectations may provide social support and structure, they can also create psychological pressure for women who feel uncertain or fearful about marriage. Recent evidence suggests that societal pressure to marry is associated with increased levels of anxiety and emotional distress among unmarried Pakistani women (Hassan, 2024).

Several factors have been identified in the literature as contributing to fear of marriage. These include negative family experiences, parental conflict, divorce, fear of losing personal independence, concerns about in-law relationships, low self-esteem, and uncertainty regarding future marital roles (Chang, 2024; Jarwan & Abu-Al-Rub, 2024; Tabkhi et al., 2025). In collectivistic societies such as Pakistan, these concerns may become more pronounced because marriage often involves adjustments not only with a spouse but also with extended family systems and social expectations.

The consequences of fear of marriage can extend beyond marital decisions. Research indicates that individuals experiencing high levels of marriage-related fear may report increased anxiety, emotional distress, relationship difficulties, social withdrawal, and uncertainty regarding future life goals (Ossai & Chujor, 2023; Chang, 2024). These effects may be particularly important during emerging adulthood, a developmental period characterized by identity exploration, career development, and decision-making about intimate relationships.

The present study focuses on emerging adult women between the ages of 18 and 29 years. According to Emerging Adulthood Theory, this period is marked by self-exploration, identity development, and increasing independence (Arnett, 2000). For many young women, marriage represents a major life transition that may influence personal goals, career aspirations, and future identity. Consequently, concerns about marriage may become especially relevant during this developmental stage.

This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived psychosocial experiences of fear of marriage among Pakistani women. IPA is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand how individuals interpret and make sense of important life experiences within their social and cultural contexts (Smith et al., 2009). The study is guided by the Biopsychosocial Model and Emerging Adulthood Theory, which together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how psychological, social, cultural, and developmental factors contribute to fear of marriage. Although international research on fear of marriage has increased in recent years, limited qualitative research has examined this phenomenon within the Pakistani context. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the lived experiences of fear of marriage among emerging adult Pakistani women and to develop a deeper understanding of the psychological and sociocultural factors associated with this experience. The findings may contribute to the existing literature and provide useful insights for mental health professionals, counselors, educators, and researchers working with young women in Pakistan

## Literature review

Fear of marriage, commonly referred to as gamophobia, is a persistent fear of entering marriage or long-term committed relationships. Recent studies suggest that this fear is influenced by psychological, social, and cultural factors rather than being a simple hesitation toward marriage. Women experiencing fear of marriage often report anxiety, avoidance of commitment, concerns about future responsibilities, and uncertainty regarding marital life (Chang, 2024; Safiudin, 2024).

Research conducted in different cultural settings has identified several factors associated with fear of marriage. These include exposure to parental conflict, negative family experiences, fear of divorce, concerns about losing personal freedom, and low self-esteem. Women who have observed unhappy marriages within their families may develop negative expectations about their own future relationships, which can increase fear and avoidance of marriage (Ossai & Chujor, 2023; Tabkhi et al., 2025).

Recent evidence also highlights the role of social and cultural influences. Chang (2024) reported that concerns about career development, personal independence, family expectations, and adaptation to new family systems contribute significantly to fear of marriage among women. In collectivistic societies, where marriage is often considered a social obligation, these pressures may intensify psychological distress and create conflicting feelings toward marriage.

Recent research has suggested that relationship anxiety and fear of commitment are closely associated with attachment insecurity and concerns about relationship quality. Individuals who report higher levels of attachment anxiety and distrust in close relationships often experience greater uncertainty regarding long-term commitment and marital relationships. These findings indicate that interpersonal trust and attachment-related concerns may contribute to fears surrounding marriage and intimate relationships (Çetinkaya-Yıldız et al., 2025; Fontana et al., 2025).

Furthermore, contemporary studies have highlighted that changing social expectations and developmental priorities among emerging adults may influence attitudes toward marriage. Young adults increasingly prioritize personal growth, emotional readiness, educational attainment, and financial stability before entering marriage. As a result, uncertainty about future responsibilities and readiness for commitment may contribute to marriage-related anxiety and hesitation among women (Najmudin et al., 2025)

In the Pakistani context, marriage holds strong social and cultural importance, particularly for women. Family expectations, traditional gender roles, and concerns regarding adjustment with in-laws can influence attitudes toward marriage. Research has shown that social pressure related to marriage is associated with higher levels of anxiety and emotional distress among unmarried Pakistani women (Hassan, 2024). These pressures may create a conflict between personal aspirations and societal expectations, increasing fear and uncertainty regarding marriage.

The current study is guided by the Biopsychosocial Model and Emerging Adulthood Theory. The Biopsychosocial Model explains fear of marriage as the result of interactions among psychological experiences, social influences, and individual perceptions. Emerging Adulthood Theory suggests that individuals aged 18–29 years are engaged in identity exploration and future planning, making marriage-related decisions particularly significant during this developmental period (Numan et al., 2025). Understanding fear of marriage within these theoretical perspectives may provide a deeper understanding of the lived psychosocial experiences of emerging adult Pakistani women.

## Objectives

- To explore the experiences of fear of marriage among emerging adult women in Pakistan.
- To understand the biological, psychological, and social factors that contribute to fear of marriage.
- To examine how personal goals, independence, and identity development interact with social and cultural expectations of marriage in Pakistan.

- To explore how fear of marriage affects participants' daily lives, relationships, emotional well-being, and future decisions.
- To provide a better understanding of fear of marriage that may help counsellors, psychologists, and mental health professionals support women more effectively.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: How do emerging adult women in Pakistan experience fear of marriage?

RQ2: What biological, psychological, and social factors contribute to their fear of marriage?

RQ3: How do personal goals and social expectations of marriage influence women's fear of marriage?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study used a qualitative research design based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding how people make sense of their personal experiences. The present study aimed to explore the lived experience of fear of marriage among emerging adult women in Pakistan. IPA was considered suitable because fear of marriage is a personal, emotional, and culturally influenced experience. This approach allowed participants to describe their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words. The study was guided by a social constructionist perspective, which suggests that people's experiences and beliefs are shaped by their social and cultural environment.

#### **Participants and Sampling**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience of fear of marriage and could provide detailed information about their experiences. The purposive selection of respondents to give deep and substantial information on the topic being investigated (Creswell, 2013). In line with IPA guidelines, a small and focused sample was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of each participant's perspective. The sample consisted of 7 unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 29 years who reported experiencing fear, anxiety, or hesitation regarding marriage. Participants were recruited through academic contacts, social media platforms, and personal referrals. Snowball sampling was also used, where participants referred other individuals who met the study criteria.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Unmarried Pakistani Female participants aged 18–29 years, Self-reported fear, anxiety, or hesitation about marriage. Willing to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent. Able to communicate in Urdu, Roman Urdu, or English.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

Married, divorced, widowed, or remarried individuals. Individuals receiving intensive psychiatric treatment that could affect participation. Those unwilling to allow audio recording of interviews, Individuals unable to participate in a 45–60 minute interview.

#### **Research Instrument**

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview developed by the researcher guide as the key tool in analysis which is congruent with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in IPA because they provide flexibility and allow participants to share their experiences freely while keeping the discussion focused on the research topic. The interview guide covered five main areas: perceptions of marriage, experiences of fear related to marriage, factors contributing to this fear, its effects on emotional well-being, and the role of family and cultural

influences (Engel, 1977). Open-ended questions and follow-up probes were used to encourage participants to provide detailed responses. The interview guide was reviewed by two faculty members with expertise in psychology to ensure clarity and relevance. Minor revisions were made before the start of data collection.

### **Procedure**

After obtaining approval from the Department of Social Sciences, participants were recruited through academic contacts, social media, and personal networks. Interested individuals were informed about the purpose of the study and screened according to the inclusion criteria. Before each interview, participants received information about the study, including its purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection began. Individual interviews were conducted in Urdu or Roman Urdu according to participant preference. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and took place in a private and comfortable setting. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded. The researcher also maintained field notes to record observations and reflections during the interview process. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Any identifying information was removed and replaced with pseudonyms to protect participant identity.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using the six-step IPA process described by Smith et al. (2009). The researcher first read and re-read each transcript to become familiar with the participants' experiences. Detailed notes were then made about important statements, meanings, emotions, and patterns within the data. Emerging themes were identified from each transcript and organized into meaningful categories. Each participant's account was analyzed separately before comparing findings across participants. Finally, common themes and patterns were identified while also acknowledging individual differences. The final findings consisted of master themes and subthemes supported by direct quotations from participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

Several steps were taken to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the study. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, where participants reviewed summaries of the findings to confirm that their experiences had been accurately represented. In qualitative research, the elements of reliability and validity as used in research quantitatively are substituted by the wider more epistemologically responsibility framework of trustworthiness as used by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Transferability was supported by providing clear descriptions of the participants, research setting, and procedures. Dependability was strengthened through maintaining detailed records of research decisions and reflections throughout the study. Confirmability was supported through regular discussions with the research supervisor to reduce personal bias and ensure that interpretations were grounded in the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study followed ethical guidelines for psychological research and received departmental approval before data collection. Participation was completely voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, and all data were stored securely. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Because the topic involved personal and emotional experiences, interviews were conducted in a respectful and supportive manner. Participants were allowed to skip questions or stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. All research data were stored securely and used only for academic purposes

## Results

**Table 1**

*Participant characteristic*

Participants	Age	Education	Occupation
P1	24	University Student	Student
P2	27	Matric	Not employed
P3	20	FSC	Student
P4	22	University Student	Student
P5	21	University Student	Student
P6	23	University Student	Student
P7	25	Graduate	School teacher

**Table 2**

*Cross-Case Master Themes*

Sr No.	Master theme	Key Sub-theme
1	relational trauma and negative marital models	Witnessing parental conflict, maternal suffering, abusive marriage
2	Loss of identity, freedom, and independence	Fear of losing selfhood, career disruption, reduced autonomy
3	Social Pressure and Gendered Expectations	Family pressure, cultural norms, divorce stigma
4	Psychological and Physical impact of Fear	Anxiety symptoms, sleep disturbance, reduced functioning
5	Silence, Isolation, and Avoidance	Lack of support, emotional isolation, avoidance coping

Seven unmarried Pakistani women aged 18–29 years participated in the study. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), resulting in five cross-case master themes that reflected participants' lived experiences of fear of marriage.

### **Theme 1: Relational Trauma and Negative Marital Models**

All participants described exposure to unhappy, conflictual, or abusive marriages within their families or social environments. Observing emotional neglect, domestic conflict, violence, and unequal treatment contributed to negative beliefs about marriage and increased fear regarding future marital relationships.

For many participants, their mothers' marital experiences served as powerful examples of the difficulties women may face after marriage. Some participants also reported personal relationship experiences that strengthened their fears.

- "I don't want to face what my mother and cousins have faced."

### **Theme 2: Loss of Identity, Freedom, and Independence**

Most participants feared that marriage could limit their freedom, educational goals, career aspirations, and personal identity. Marriage was often perceived as a potential threat to self-development and independence. Participants expressed concerns about becoming dependent on a spouse, sacrificing personal ambitions, and losing control over important life decisions. At the same time, they described an ideal marriage as one based on mutual respect, trust, equality, and emotional support.

- "I want to be independent. I don't want to lose myself after marriage."

### **Theme 3: Social Pressure and Gendered Expectations**

Participants consistently identified cultural expectations and social pressure as major contributors to their fear of marriage. Family expectations, societal norms, and concerns about social judgment created additional anxiety regarding marital decisions.

Many participants highlighted gender-based inequalities and believed that women often face greater responsibilities and restrictions after marriage. The perceived difficulty of leaving an unhappy marriage further intensified these concerns.

- “We are always told that marriage is our destiny. Why only us?”

### **Theme 4: Psychological and Physical Impact of Fear**

Fear of marriage was experienced not only emotionally but also physically. Participants reported symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, headaches, breathing difficulties, sleep disturbances, and reduced appetite when discussing or thinking about marriage.

Several participants also described difficulties concentrating on studies, reduced motivation, and emotional distress, indicating that fear of marriage affected multiple areas of daily life.

- “My heart starts beating fast and I feel nervous whenever the topic comes up.”

### **Theme 5: Silence, Isolation, and Avoidance**

Most participants reported dealing with their fears without emotional or professional support. Fear of being misunderstood or judged prevented many from discussing their concerns with family members.

Avoidance emerged as the most common coping strategy. Participants avoided conversations about marriage, postponed decisions, or distanced themselves from situations that triggered anxiety. Only one participant reported seeking professional counselling.

- “As soon as someone starts talking about marriage, I try to leave the conversation.”

### **Unique Individual Experiences**

Although common patterns emerged across participants, several experiences were unique. One participant primarily feared her own inability to fulfill marital responsibilities and viewed divorce as a possible result of personal failure. Another participant identified social media as a factor that reinforced negative perceptions of marriage. One participant had sought professional counselling and reported partial benefits, while another demonstrated resilience by viewing marriage as only one aspect of life rather than its central purpose.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings indicate that fear of marriage among emerging adult women in Pakistan is shaped by a combination of negative marital observations, concerns about identity and independence, social and cultural pressures, psychological and physical distress, and limited support systems. Together, these themes highlight fear of marriage as a complex psychosocial experience influenced by personal, familial, and societal factors.

### **Discussion**

This study explored the lived experience of fear of marriage among seven emerging adult Pakistani women using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Five main themes emerged from the participants' accounts: negative experiences and observations of marriage, fear of losing identity and independence, social and cultural pressure, physical symptoms of anxiety, and feelings of loneliness and lack of support.

The findings suggest that fear of marriage is influenced by a combination of personal experiences, family background, and cultural expectations. Many participants described marriage as something that could limit their freedom, affect their future goals, and create emotional stress. Similar concerns have also been reported in recent studies on fear of marriage and relationship anxiety (Sonkaya & Ocal, 2024; Cantkin & Kunduraci, 2024).

### **Interpretation through the Biopsychosocial Model**

The findings support the Biopsychosocial Model by showing that fear of marriage develops through biological, psychological, and social factors working together. At the biological level, participants reported symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sleep problems, sweating, and feelings of anxiety when thinking or talking about marriage. These findings are similar to recent research showing that fear of marriage can also affect physical well-being (Jarwan & Abu-Al-Rub, 2024).

At the psychological level, many participants expressed fears about relationship failure, loss of independence, and uncertainty about the future. Negative experiences within families and observing unhappy marriages appeared to shape their beliefs about marriage. Recent studies have also found that negative perceptions of marriage can increase marriage-related anxiety (Tabkhi et al., 2025).

At the social level, family expectations, cultural norms, and pressure to get married played an important role. Participants often felt that society expected them to marry regardless of their personal concerns. These findings support recent Pakistani research showing that social pressure is linked with higher levels of anxiety among unmarried women (Hassan, 2024). Overall, the results show that fear of marriage cannot be explained by one factor alone. Instead, it develops through the interaction of personal thoughts, emotional experiences, and social influences.

### **Interpretation through Emerging Adulthood Theory**

The findings also support Emerging Adulthood Theory. Most participants were focused on education, career development, and building their own identity. Many felt that marriage might interfere with these goals and reduce their independence. Recent research conducted in Pakistan has shown that identity exploration and self-development are important aspects of emerging adulthood (Numan et al., 2025). The present findings suggest that fear of marriage may increase when young women feel that marriage could limit their personal growth, career opportunities, or future plans.

### **Comparison with Previous Literature**

The findings are generally consistent with previous international studies. Research has shown that witnessing unhappy marriages, concerns about personal freedom, family influence, and gender expectations can contribute to fear of marriage (Sonkaya & Ocal, 2024; Tabkhi et al., 2025). A significant contribution of the present study is its focus on Pakistani women. Participants highlighted issues such as family pressure, fear of divorce stigma, joint family expectations, and concerns about losing independence after marriage. These factors reflect the unique cultural realities faced by many Pakistani women and add valuable insight to the existing literature on fear of marriage.

### **Implications**

The findings suggest a need for counseling services that address marriage-related fears among young women. Premarital counseling may help women discuss concerns related to relationships, independence, and future responsibilities before marriage. Mental health professionals should also consider cultural and family influences when working with women experiencing marriage-related anxiety. In addition, family awareness programs may help parents better understand the emotional challenges faced by young women and encourage more supportive communication.

## Limitations and Suggestion

This study has some limitations. The sample consisted of only seven participants, so the findings cannot be generalized to all Pakistani women. Most participants were university students from urban backgrounds, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other groups. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in English, which may have affected how participants expressed their feelings and experiences. Future studies should include women from different educational, socioeconomic, and geographical backgrounds. Research is also needed to develop culturally appropriate tools for assessing fear of marriage in Pakistan. In addition, future studies should examine the role of social media and evaluate counseling interventions designed to reduce marriage-related anxiety.

## Conclusion

This study provides an understanding of how young Pakistani women experience fear of marriage. The findings show that this fear is shaped by personal experiences, family influences, cultural expectations, and concerns about the future. Fear of marriage was closely linked with worries about independence, identity, social pressure, and emotional well-being. The study highlights the need for greater awareness, culturally sensitive counseling services, and further research to better support young women facing marriage-related concerns in Pakistan.

## Reference

- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
- Cantekin, Ö. F., & Kunduracı, N. F. (2024). Marriage anxiety of university students in terms of family belonging and parental attitude. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(3), 377–385. <https://doi.org/10.61707/k0ghk087>
- Çetinkaya-Yıldız, E., Aracı-İyiyaydın, A., & Toplu-Demirtaş, E. (2025). The ill fortune of attachment insecurity and dyadic distrust in marital satisfaction: A dyadic perspective in Turkish couples. *BMC Psychology*, 13, 417. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02719-8>
- Chang, J. N. (2024). *Why do Chinese women experience gamophobia? Psychoanalytic theory assisted discourses analysis*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1357795. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1357795>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Engel, G. L. (1977). *The need for a new medical model: A challenge for biomedicine*. *Science*, 196(4286), 129–136. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.847460>
- Fontana, A., Mangialavori, S., Benzi, I. M. A., Tracchegiani, J., Parolin, L. A. L., Cacioppo, M., & Carone, N. (2025). Attachment styles, epistemic trust and mentalized affectivity in love addiction among emerging adult women. *Discover Psychology*, 5, 124.
- Hassan, A. (2024). *Assessing association of societal pressure to get married with anxiety and depression among unmarried women (25–49 years of age in Pakistan): A mixed method study* (Master's thesis, Aga Khan University)
- Jarwan, N. D., & Abu-Al-Rub, Y. K. (2024). Gamophobia and its relationship with family communication patterns among unmarried postgraduate students at Yarmouk University. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 206–227. <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.682>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Najmudin, M. Z., Ishaq, I., & Nurcahyono, M. L. (2025). The phenomenon of “Marriage is scary” and the role of premarital guidance in preparing the mental and emotional health of prospective brides and

- grooms. *Academia Open*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921>
- Numan, A., Muazzam, A., & Arnett, J. J. (2025). Dimensions of emerging adulthood in Pakistan: A demographic profile. *Journal of Adult Development*, 32(3), 211-221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-024-09493-8>
- Sonkaya, Z. İ., & Öcal, N. Ü. (2024). Young people's attitudes toward marriage, gender roles, and related factors. *BMC Public Health*, 24, 3347. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-20904-z>
- Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Sliding versus deciding: Inertia and the premarital cohabitation effect. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(5), 585–608. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2006.25.5.585>
- Tabkhi, F., Dehghan Manshadi, M., & Rezapour-Mirsaleh, Y. (2025). Phenomenological investigation of negative attitudes towards marriage in female students. *BMC Psychology*, 13, 654. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02520-7>
- Willoughby, B. J. (2013). The marital horizon: Variability in young adults' relationship expectations. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(12), 1590–1611. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12464088>
- Ossai, M. O., & Chujor, C. J. (2023). Some social predictors of gamophobia among unmarried postgraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. *British Journal of Education*, 11(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2023/vol11n11324>
- Psychology Today*. (2025). *Gamophobia*. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gamophobia>
- Safiudin, K. (2024). Gender problems in Indonesia: The phenomenon of gamophobia in a permissive society. *Annisa: Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(1), 67–82. <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i1.245>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE Publications.