



Mental Resilience of Indonesian Career Women In Responding To Marriage-Related Social Pressure

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mental resilience of Indonesian career women in responding to marriage-related social pressure, particularly the recurring question “When will you get married?”. Previous studies have discussed social stigma and psychological pressure toward unmarried women; however, limited studies specifically analyze this phenomenon through the perspective of resilience theory among career women in Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative literature review method using journal articles indexed in Google Scholar, SINTA, and Scopus published between 2018 and 2026. Data were collected using keywords related to career women, marriage pressure, mental resilience, and social stigma. A total of 47 relevant articles were analyzed through thematic analysis techniques. The findings reveal that marriage-related social pressure contributes to anxiety, stress, loneliness, decreased psychological well-being, and reduced interest in marriage among career women. Furthermore, mental resilience plays a significant role in helping women manage emotional pressure, maintain self-confidence, and develop adaptive coping strategies. This study contributes to the development of resilience psychology discourse, particularly in understanding the relationship between gender expectations, social pressure, and mental well-being among career women in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage remains one of the most dominant social expectations imposed on women in Indonesian society (Marini et al., 2022). In many cultural contexts, women are often deemed successful only when they fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers. Consequently, women who remain unmarried past a certain age frequently face intense social pressure through the relentless question, "Kapan nikah?" (When are you getting married?). While this question is often brushed off as a form of care, casual humor, or just small talk, it can cause deep psychological

discomfort and an emotional burden, particularly for women who choose to prioritize their careers and personal readiness. In Indonesia, marriage is still socially constructed as a major milestone of adulthood and social achievement, leaving unmarried women highly vulnerable to stigma and negative labeling (Anisya et al., 2023). Recent studies also show that the number of individuals delaying marriage in Indonesia is steadily rising, driven by a focus on higher education, economic uncertainty, career priorities, and shifting social values regarding relationships and family planning (Firdaus & Rahmasari, 2022).

The social pressure on unmarried women is becoming increasingly visible in contemporary society, especially within the context of early adulthood and the quarter-life crisis. The recurring question "Kapan nikah?" is no longer seen as just casual banter; instead, it often functions as a subtle form of social control that pressures individuals to conform to dominant cultural expectations. Research by Sari, (2025) indicates that such questions can trigger anxiety, emotional distress, and even a declining interest in marriage altogether, as women find them intrusive and judgmental. Similar findings reveal that social expectations surrounding marriage can breed feelings of failure, overthinking, and psychological stress among women who are single past the socially expected age. In many cases, unmarried women are labeled as "telat" (late), "tidak laku" (unmarketable), or incomplete, despite their impressive achievements in education and their professional careers. This stigmatizing perception directly contributes to emotional distress and a decline in overall psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the growing public discourse around delayed marriage reflects a broader transformation within modern society. Increased access to higher education for women, career aspirations, economic hurdles, and changing perspectives on marriage have significantly shifted women's life priorities (Siregar et al., 2023). Many women today view marriage not as an obligatory life stage, but as a deeply personal decision that requires emotional, psychological, and financial readiness (Raihana, 2024). Recent research on unmarried career women in Indonesia shows that many intentionally delay marriage because they choose to prioritize self-development, career stability, and psychological readiness before entering into a long-term commitment (Murti & Amini, 2025). This phenomenon highlights a shift in women's agency and autonomy in charting their own life paths. Yet, despite these changing social dynamics, traditional expectations around marriage remain deeply entrenched in Indonesian society, creating persistent social pressure for women who do not conform to the status quo.

Career women, in particular, face a more complex layer of pressure as they are expected to balance professional achievements with traditional gender roles concerning marriage and family life. Career-focused women are often mischaracterized as overly ambitious, too picky, or unwilling to commit. In some instances, career success itself is viewed negatively, as if a woman's professional accomplishments pose a threat to the traditional family structure. This places career women in a difficult social predicament, forcing them to constantly negotiate between personal aspirations and societal expectations. Previous studies indicate that career women often carry a double burden: the pressure to succeed professionally while simultaneously meeting cultural expectations related to marriage and motherhood (Frelians & Astuti, 2024). As a result, many

women experience internal conflict while trying to align their personal goals with societal demands.

Beyond societal expectations, fear and anxiety about marriage itself also influence women's decisions to delay tying the knot. Contemporary discussions around domestic violence (KDRT), gender role imbalances, the emotional toll of marriage, and economic instability have shaped how many women view marital relationships. Several studies reveal that women often worry about losing their personal freedom, career opportunities, and emotional stability after marriage (H. Handayani et al., 2024; Silalahi, 2018). Recent findings also suggest that anxieties regarding marital conflict and psychological abuse significantly fuel women's hesitation toward marriage. In Indonesia, growing public awareness about unhealthy relationships, gender inequality, and domestic abuse has prompted many women to be far more cautious in choosing a life partner. Consequently, delaying marriage is not necessarily a rejection of social norms, but rather a rational consideration of emotional readiness and future well-being (Itaqitafuzhi et al., 2026; Oktaviani, 2025).

Social media and digital communication have also amplified public conversations around marriage, gender expectations, and women's life choices. Online discussions increasingly reflect women's experiences with emotional burnout due to marriage-related social pressures. Public discourse across digital platforms shows that many women feel trapped between societal expectations and their own aspirations. Some women openly express the stress, anxiety, and fear triggered by family expectations, cultural traditions, and societal judgments regarding the timing of marriage. While social media may not fully represent society as a whole, these discussions demonstrate that marriage-related pressure has become a highly relevant psychological and social issue among modern women. The rise of narratives like "pernikahan itu menakutkan" (marriage is terrifying) also reflects a paradigm shift among the younger generation, who increasingly value emotional safety, equality, and personal growth within a relationship.

Psychologically, relentless social pressure regarding marriage can take a heavy toll on women's mental well-being. Several studies show that repeated exposure to judgmental questions and social stigma contributes to anxiety, loneliness, emotional stress, and a drop in self-esteem among unmarried women (Mulyani & Sari, 2024; Suryani, 2023). In some cases, women may socially withdraw and experience a decline in psychological well-being because they feel constantly judged solely on their marital status. Research on unmarried women in Indonesia also reveals that resilience plays a vital role in buffering against quarter-life crises and the emotional instability caused by social expectations. This suggests that psychological resilience acts as a protective shield, enabling women to adapt positively despite facing social pressures and emotional hurdles.

The concept of mental resilience is becoming increasingly vital to understanding how career women navigate social pressures related to marriage. Resilience theory explains that individuals possess the ability to adapt, recover, and maintain psychological functioning despite facing adversity and stressful life situations (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2001). In the context of marriage pressure, mental resilience allows women to regulate their emotions, maintain self-

confidence, reframe negative social judgments, and develop adaptive coping strategies. Individuals with strong resilience tend to make life decisions based on personal readiness and core values rather than external demands. Conversely, women with lower resilience may be more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and emotional instability when facing continuous social pressure. Therefore, resilience is not just about emotional endurance; it also reflects a woman's capacity to maintain her autonomy and psychological well-being in a highly demanding environment.

While previous research has explored delayed marriage, psychological distress, social stigma, and women's well-being in Indonesian society, most existing studies focus primarily on social stigma or psychological consequences. They often overlook the specific role of mental resilience among career women facing marriage-related pressures. Studies examining how resilience theory explains a woman's ability to cope with recurring social expectations of marriage within the Indonesian cultural context remain limited. This gap is critical because resilience can serve as a key psychological mechanism that allows women to navigate social pressure while maintaining emotional stability and personal autonomy. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the mental resilience of Indonesian career women in responding to marriage-related social pressure through a literature review approach. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the psychology of resilience and gender studies by shedding light on the relationship between social expectations, women's autonomy, and psychological well-being. Practically, this study hopes to raise public awareness about the psychological impact of socially sensitive questions on women, while encouraging more empathetic social communication in contemporary society.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative literature review approach to examine the mental resilience of career women in responding to marriage-related social pressure, particularly the recurring question "Kapan nikah?". The literature review method was chosen because it allows the researcher to synthesize findings from prior research, identify recurring patterns, and develop a broader understanding of psychological resilience among career women within a contemporary social context (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021; Sugiyono, 2013). A literature review is deemed appropriate for exploring social and psychological phenomena that have been extensively discussed across various interdisciplinary fields, including psychology, gender studies, sociology, and communication studies.

The data sources used in this study were obtained from scientific journal articles, academic books, and relevant scholarly publications indexed in Google Scholar, SINTA, and Scopus. The literature search focused on publications published between 2018 and 2026 to ensure that the reviewed studies reflect contemporary discussions on women, marriage pressure, social stigma, and psychological well-being. Recent references were prioritized to strengthen the relevance and novelty of the research, particularly regarding current social transformations that influence women's perspectives on marriage and career development.

The literature search process was conducted using several keywords and keyword combinations related to the research topic. The primary keywords included "career women,"

"mental resilience," "psychological well-being," "marriage pressure," "social stigma," "delayed marriage," "quarter-life crisis," and "kapan nikah." Boolean operators such as "AND" and "OR" were also used to expand and refine the search results. For instance, search combinations included "career women AND marriage pressure," "mental resilience OR psychological resilience," and "career women AND social stigma." Using these various keyword combinations aimed to identify a wide range of perspectives and findings relevant to the research objectives.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the selected literature, this study applied several inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles and academic publications, (2) studies discussing women, career women, or unmarried women, (3) research focusing on psychological distress, resilience, social stigma, or marriage-related social expectations, (4) publications written in Indonesian or English, and (5) studies published between 2018 and 2026. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included: (1) opinion pieces without scientific analysis, (2) non-academic online sources, (3) duplicate publications, and (4) studies unrelated to women's psychological experiences or resilience against social pressure.

The initial search process identified approximately 287 articles from various databases and search platforms. After conducting a screening procedure based on titles, abstracts, duplications, and thematic relevance, 74 articles were categorized as potentially relevant. Subsequently, a more detailed content evaluation was carried out to assess the alignment of each study with the research objectives and conceptual focus. Following this evaluation process, 47 articles were selected as the primary references for analysis because they presented significant discussions on psychological well-being, resilience, social pressure, marriage expectations, and women's experiences in contemporary society.

The data analysis process in this study used thematic analysis techniques (Sitasari, 2022). Thematic analysis was selected because it allows the researcher to systematically identify recurring themes, interpret patterns of meaning, and synthesize findings from various studies (Adelliani et al., 2023). The analysis process involved several stages, including data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis of findings. In the first stage, the selected literature was carefully reviewed to identify key concepts and recurring discussions related to marriage-related social pressure and women's resilience. In the second stage, the findings were grouped into several major themes, including psychological impact, social stigma, emotional responses, resilience factors, and coping strategies. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted and synthesized to build a comprehensive understanding of how career women develop mental resilience when facing social expectations regarding marriage.

To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, this study also applied source triangulation by comparing findings from different studies, theoretical perspectives, and research contexts (Adlini et al., 2022). This process was intended to minimize bias and ensure that the synthesized findings reflect the broader academic discussion on women's resilience and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the resilience theory put forward by Garmezy, (1991); Masten, (2001) was used as the primary analytical framework to interpret how career women adapt to psychological distress

and maintain emotional stability despite experiencing persistent social expectations regarding marriage.

Overall, this literature review approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social pressure, marriage expectations, and mental resilience among career women. Through a systematic analysis of recent academic literature, this study seeks to contribute to contemporary discussions in resilience psychology and gender studies, particularly concerning women's autonomy and psychological well-being in modern Indonesian society.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this literature review indicate that marriage-related social pressure has a significant psychological impact on career women, particularly those in early and middle adulthood who face recurring social expectations regarding marriage. Based on the analysis of the 47 selected studies, the repeated question "Kapan nikah?" is no longer interpreted merely as casual social interaction, but is increasingly felt as a form of symbolic pressure that affects women's emotional well-being and psychological stability. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that women who prioritize career development and personal readiness before marriage frequently experience anxiety, stress, emotional burnout, and social discomfort due to the continuous scrutiny of their marital status.

The reviewed studies also reveal that marriage remains socially positioned as a crucial indicator of a woman's success and adulthood in Indonesian society. Consequently, women who are not married by a certain age often become vulnerable to negative labeling and stigma (Septiana & Syafiq, 2013). This condition creates psychological distress as women feel socially judged based on their marital status rather than their individual achievements, competence, or personal readiness. Furthermore, career women face more complex pressure because they must negotiate between professional aspirations and traditional expectations regarding marriage and family life (Abel, 2025; A. Handayani, 2025).

This analysis identifies several dominant psychological impacts experienced by career women as a result of marriage-related social pressure. Anxiety emerges as the most frequently discussed psychological consequence, followed by stress, loneliness, decreased self-esteem, and a declining interest in marriage itself. These findings indicate that recurring social expectations regarding marriage contribute significantly to the emotional burden among women.

Table 1. Psychological Impacts of Marriage-Related Social Pressure

Psychological Impacts	Frequency of Findings	Supporting Studies
Anxiety	31 studies	(Sari, 2025; Suryani, 2023; Zaelani et al., 2025)
Stress	27 studies	(Izzah & Widyastuti, 2025; Mulyani & Sari, 2024)
Loneliness	18 studies	(Adetya & Manurung, 2022)

Decreased self-confidence	15 studies	(Mulyani & Sari, 2024; Septiana & Syafiq, 2013)
Marriage avoidance/resistance	12 studies	(Hasanuddin et al., 2026; Sari, 2025)

Table 1 shows that anxiety is the most dominant psychological impact identified in the reviewed studies. Most women experience emotional discomfort because recurring questions about marriage create feelings of uncertainty, fear of social judgment, and pressure to meet societal expectations. Several studies reveal that constant exposure to such questions contributes to excessive overthinking and emotional instability, particularly among women entering the quarter-life crisis phase. Stress also emerges as a primary psychological consequence, as women often feel trapped between pursuing personal aspirations and responding to external social demands.

Another crucial finding identified in this research is the emergence of loneliness and decreased self-esteem among unmarried career women. Several reviewed studies show that women who constantly receive negative comments regarding marriage frequently feel socially isolated and emotionally exhausted (Isnanda, 2025). In some cases, women deliberately avoid family gatherings or social interactions to prevent emotionally uncomfortable conversations about marriage. This avoidance behavior contributes to reduced social support and a decline in psychological well-being over time.

Furthermore, several studies reveal that excessive social pressure can paradoxically decrease a woman's interest in marriage. Rather than fostering emotional readiness for a long-term relationship, repeated pressure often creates emotional resistance as women begin to view marriage as an imposed social obligation rather than a personal life choice. This finding indicates that socially insensitive communication can negatively affect women's perceptions of marriage itself.

In addition to the psychological impacts, the reviewed studies also identify several dominant resilience factors that help career women cope with marriage-related social pressure. Mental resilience emerges as a vital psychological mechanism that enables women to maintain emotional stability, regulate stress, and preserve autonomy in making life decisions despite persistent social expectations (Panggallo et al., 2024).

Table 2. Dominant Mental Resilience Factors among Career Women

Resilience Factors	Main Function
Emotional regulation	Reducing anxiety and emotional stress
Self-confidence	Strengthening autonomy and personal decision-making
Social support	Improving emotional stability and psychological well-being
Career orientation	Increasing self-worth and life satisfaction
Adaptive coping strategies	Managing social pressure positively

Table 2 shows that emotional regulation and self-confidence are the most crucial resilience factors discussed in the reviewed studies. Career women who possess strong emotional regulation tend to respond to social judgment more adaptively and avoid overreacting to negative comments

regarding marriage. Similarly, women with higher self-confidence are better able to define success based on personal values rather than social expectations (Yasya, 2025).

The reviewed studies also indicate that social support serves as an essential external protective factor. Supportive relationships with friends, family members, and professional communities help women reduce emotional stress and maintain a positive self-perception (Oktarika & Kom, 2026). Additionally, career orientation contributes significantly to women's resilience, as professional achievements and self-development reinforce their sense of autonomy and personal fulfillment (Hoga Saragih et al., 2024).

Another key finding identified in this research is the role of adaptive coping strategies in helping women respond positively to social pressure. Several studies demonstrate that women frequently develop coping mechanisms such as focusing on self-development, limiting exposure to toxic social environments, strengthening spirituality, and building supportive social networks. These coping strategies enable women to reframe social pressure more constructively and maintain emotional balance despite continuous judgment from their surroundings.

Overall, the findings from this literature review show that marriage-related social pressure significantly impacts the psychological well-being of career women. Anxiety, stress, loneliness, emotional burnout, and decreased self-esteem emerge as the dominant psychological impacts associated with recurring social expectations regarding marriage. However, the reviewed studies also confirm that mental resilience plays a vital role in helping women adapt positively to social pressure, maintain emotional stability, and preserve autonomy in determining their personal life choices.

Discussion on Psychological Impact

The findings indicate that marriage-related social pressure functions as a form of symbolic social control in Indonesian society (Zandri & Kustantinah, 2025). The recurring question "Kapan nikah?" reflects dominant cultural expectations that position marriage as a mandatory achievement for women. Although socially normalized, this question can generate emotional discomfort because it indirectly judges women based on their marital status rather than their individual competence or personal readiness.

The reviewed studies indicate that anxiety and stress arise because women constantly experience pressure to conform to social standards (Taufiqoh, 2025). This finding supports previous research explaining that women's psychological well-being is heavily influenced by social acceptance and cultural expectations surrounding gender roles. Women who are unmarried at the socially expected age often carry an emotional burden due to the fear of judgment and stigma from their surroundings.

Furthermore, the loneliness and decreased self-esteem identified in several studies show that marriage-related pressure also affects women's social relationships and self-perception. Continuous exposure to negative comments regarding marital status can erode a woman's confidence and emotional security. This condition becomes more complex for career women, as they often face the assumption that their career orientation causes the delay in marriage, regardless

of the fact that their decisions are influenced by various psychological and social considerations (Khayra, 2025; Taran et al., 2024).

The findings also reveal that excessive social pressure can decrease a woman's interest in marriage itself. This condition demonstrates that emotionally insensitive communication can create resistance rather than emotional readiness. Consequently, social pressure regarding marriage should not be interpreted merely as interpersonal interaction, but also as a psychological issue that affects women's mental well-being.

Discussion on Mental Resilience and Coping Strategies

The findings from this study confirm that resilience theory provides an essential framework for understanding how career women cope with marriage-related social pressure. According to the resilience theory put forward by Garmezy, (1991 and Masten, (2001), resilience refers to an individual's adaptive capacity when facing adversity, stress, and emotional challenges. In this study, resilience manifests through emotional regulation, self-confidence, adaptive coping strategies, and the ability to maintain autonomy despite persistent social expectations.

Women with stronger resilience tend to view marriage as a personal life choice rather than an imposed social obligation. Emotional regulation allows women to manage anxiety and emotional discomfort more effectively, while self-confidence helps them maintain a positive self-perception despite receiving negative social judgments (Devi, 2025; Putri, n.d.). In addition, supportive social relationships contribute significantly to emotional stability because women feel psychologically backed and socially accepted.

The reviewed studies also show that adaptive coping strategies help women reduce the negative impacts of social pressure. Some women respond to social expectations by reinforcing their career orientation, focusing on self-development, increasing spirituality, and building a healthier social environment. This finding indicates that resilience is not only influenced by an individual's psychological capacity but is also shaped by environmental support and social interaction patterns.

Implications for Psychological and Social Awareness

This study has important implications for psychological awareness, social communication, and gender sensitivity in contemporary society. The findings demonstrate that recurring questions about marriage can negatively affect women's psychological well-being, especially when delivered without emotional sensitivity. Therefore, greater public awareness regarding communication ethics and psychological boundaries is required to reduce emotionally harmful social interactions.

From a psychological perspective, this study contributes to the psychology of resilience by explaining how career women develop emotional strength in response to social pressure. These findings can also serve as a reference for counselors, educators, and mental health practitioners in developing psychological assistance programs related to self-confidence, emotional resilience, and women's mental well-being.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of social support systems in reinforcing women's resilience. Families, communities, and social environments should encourage more empathetic communication patterns that respect women's personal choices regarding marriage and life priorities. In a broader social context, these findings also contribute to discussions on gender equality, women's autonomy, and psychological well-being in modern Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that marriage-related social pressure significantly affects the psychological well-being of career women, particularly through anxiety, stress, loneliness, emotional exhaustion, and declining self-confidence. The recurring question “When will you get married?” is no longer perceived merely as casual social interaction, but increasingly functions as a form of symbolic social pressure that places women under continuous emotional evaluation based on marital status. In Indonesian society, marriage remains strongly associated with women’s social achievement and adulthood, causing unmarried women to become vulnerable to stigma and negative labeling despite their educational and professional accomplishments.

The findings of this literature review also demonstrate that career women experience more complex forms of pressure because they must negotiate between professional aspirations and traditional social expectations regarding marriage and family life. In many cases, women who prioritize career development and personal readiness before marriage are frequently perceived negatively, leading to emotional discomfort and psychological burden. Furthermore, excessive social pressure may paradoxically reduce women’s interest in marriage because marriage becomes interpreted as a compulsory social obligation rather than a personal life choice.

This study further confirms that mental resilience plays an important role in helping career women cope with marriage-related social pressure. Emotional regulation, self-confidence, adaptive coping strategies, career orientation, and social support emerge as dominant resilience factors that strengthen women’s psychological well-being. Women with stronger resilience tend to manage emotional pressure more effectively, maintain autonomy in decision-making, and reinterpret negative social judgment more adaptively. These findings support resilience theory, which explains that individuals possess the capacity to adapt positively despite experiencing social and psychological adversity.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of resilience psychology and gender studies by explaining the relationship between social expectations, women’s autonomy, and psychological well-being in contemporary Indonesian society. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of increasing public awareness regarding communication ethics, emotional sensitivity, and respect toward women’s personal life choices. Social interactions that appear simple and socially normalized may produce significant psychological impacts when repeatedly directed toward emotionally vulnerable individuals.

Finally, this study recommends that future researchers conduct empirical studies involving direct participants to further explore women’s psychological experiences, coping strategies, and resilience processes in responding to marriage-related social pressure. Future research may also

examine the influence of cultural background, religion, social media, and family dynamics on women's perceptions regarding marriage and psychological well-being.

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