

# CONTEMPORARY FAMILY DYNAMICS: ONLINE TA'ARUF APPLICATIONS, FAMILY INTERVENTIONS, AND COUPLE INTERACTION CRISIS

Citra Az Zahraa\*, Meilany Hamdiah, Salma Salfira, Sri Damayanti

*UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia*

*Email: zahraacitra@gmail.com\**

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## Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of intimate relationships among Generation Z across three stages: partner selection through online ta'aruf platforms, family negotiation in wedding planning, and post-marital interactions that may lead to household disorganization. The aim of this study is to understand how individuals make relational decisions based on rational considerations. The method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collected through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach grounded in Coleman's Rational Choice Theory. The findings indicate that the use of online ta'aruf applications encourages more rational and structured partner selection while reducing physical commodification. In the wedding planning stage, there is a flexible negotiation process between individual autonomy and family expectations, resulting in mutually perceived fair compromises. Meanwhile, in the post-marital phase, low-quality interaction and lack of emotional presence, particularly in long-distance marriages, create vulnerability to infidelity, influenced by technological opportunities and weak social control. It is concluded that household disorganization emerges as an accumulative process rooted in interactional deficits. This study recommends strengthening relational communication and premarital preparation as preventive measures.

**Keywords:** Partner Selection, Family Negotiation, Marital Interaction, Infidelity, Household Disorganization.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage as a social institution is currently facing increasingly complex challenges in the modern era. The growing use of digital technology, high economic mobility, and shifting values in social interaction have simultaneously transformed the way individuals choose partners, celebrate marriage, and maintain the stability of family relationships. This phenomenon has become widespread and is no longer limited in scope. A Populix survey titled Indonesian Usage Behavior and Online Security on Dating Apps(2024) found that 63% of young people in Indonesia reported using online dating applications, with 44% of them belonging to Generation Z. Meanwhile, data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) recorded 408,347

divorce cases in Indonesia throughout 2023, with disputes and conflicts identified as the leading cause, accounting for 251,828 cases or 61.67% of the total. These figures indicate that crises in intimate relationships are not merely individual problems, but rather social phenomena that require deeper analysis.

Various studies have explored the dynamics of intimate relationships from the perspectives of communication and social psychology. Research on relational dialectics after infidelity shows that couples who fail to preserve their relationships tend to display limited communication patterns and resistance to change. On the other hand, phenomenological studies of couples experiencing Long Distance Marriage (LDM) have found that the lack of intimate communication is closely associated with the emergence of conflict, behavioral changes, and even infidelity. Even so, these studies generally focus on only one phase of the relationship and have not examined the dynamics of intimate relationships comprehensively, from the premarital stage to the postmarital stage, within a single integrated analytical framework.

This study aims to address that gap by analyzing three important aspects in the continuous cycle of intimate relationships: the way Generation Z selects partners through online dating applications, the negotiation process in decision-making related to wedding events, and the interactions between spouses after marriage that may influence vulnerability to infidelity and disorder within the household. These three aspects are examined using James Coleman's Rational Choice Theory (1990), which suggests that individuals in society always act based on calculations intended to maximize benefits and minimize losses according to their interests. This theory provides an appropriate analytical foundation because it connects the three stages of intimate relationships within a similar logical framework: every choice made by individuals in relationships, from selecting partners on dating applications to decisions involving infidelity or divorce, can essentially be understood as the result of rational calculation. This study is limited to the dynamics of modern intimate relationships in urban Indonesian society, with emphasis on the personal experiences of actors as revealed through in-depth interviews.

Based on this context, the study formulates three research questions: how do online dating applications facilitate the commodification of emotions and transform the way Generation Z chooses partners; how does the bargaining process between family prestige demands and freedom of personal choice take place in making decisions related to wedding celebrations; and to what extent do the depth and quality of interaction between spouses affect the level of vulnerability to infidelity that may lead to disorder within the household.

## **B. LITERATURE REIEW**

### **Rational Choice Theory of James S. Coleman**

Rational Choice Theory, introduced by James S. Coleman in his book *Foundations of Social Theory* (1990), serves as the primary analytical framework in this study. Coleman argues that social behavior is guided by individuals who seek to optimize outcomes and minimize losses based on their personal interests. This theory emphasizes two key elements: actors and resources. Actors refer to individuals who perform actions, while resources encompass anything that can be utilized to achieve desired goals (Coleman, 1990). This framework is highly relevant for understanding the evolving dynamics of intimate relationships, as every decision made within a relationship from partner selection, wedding planning, to the choice of

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maintaining or ending a marriage can be seen as the result of rational considerations by individuals. This aligns with previous research applying Coleman's theory to examine marriage postponement among young people, where individuals act as rational actors by considering their financial and emotional readiness before deciding to marry (Arfi'atus Salisa, 2025).

### **Online Dating Applications and the Commodification of Mate Selection among Generation Z**

The advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed how Generation Z seeks romantic relationships. Online dating applications such as Tinder, Bumble, and Tantan have become primary platforms that facilitate partner selection based on visible online characteristics (Saputri, Nursanti, & Lubis, 2023). The swiping mechanism, which allows users to quickly accept or reject potential partners, encourages rapid evaluation based on physical appearance and profile information. This process implicitly creates a form of commodification in mate selection (Fadilla, Setiawan, & El Karimah, 2023). A survey conducted by Populix (2024), involving 1,165 respondents, found that 63% of Indonesian youth use online dating applications, with 44% belonging to Generation Z. Interestingly, only 27% use these platforms to seek serious relationships, while the majority use them for casual interaction or curiosity, indicating that relationships formed through these platforms tend to be more transactional than emotional (Populix, 2024). This phenomenon reflects how market logic has penetrated the realm of intimacy, transforming emotions into commodities that can be selected, compared, and discarded (Puspitasari & Aprilia, 2022).

### **Family Negotiation in Marriage Decision-Making**

Marriage in Indonesia is not merely a personal decision between two individuals but involves the broader interests of extended families, which significantly influence how marriages are arranged and conducted. In collectivist societies, family interests, social status, and family prestige often intersect with individual freedom in partner selection (Muzakki, Fu'ad, & Fathoni, 2025). This tension generates complex negotiation processes, particularly in decisions related to wedding ceremonies, which are deeply embedded with symbolic meaning and social status. Research on the meaning of marriage suggests that women with greater autonomy and personal agency tend to view marriage not as a traditional obligation but as a rational and personal choice. From Coleman's perspective, this negotiation can be understood as a bargaining process among actors who possess different resources and interests, where outcomes depend on the relative control over those resources.

### **Couple Interaction, Infidelity, and Household Disorganization**

The quality of interaction between partners is a critical element that significantly affects family stability and resilience. Studies indicate that effective communication, supported by openness and empathy, enhances marital harmony and strengthens commitment (Lestari & Suryanto, 2025). Conversely, declining communication and widening emotional distance increase the risk of conflict within marriage. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024) show that prolonged disputes and conflicts are the primary causes of divorce, accounting for 251,125 out of 399,921 divorce cases in 2024, far exceeding economic factors as the second leading cause. This situation becomes even more complex in Long Distance Marriages (LDM), where limited intimate communication is closely associated with conflict, behavioral changes, and

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infidelity. From a sociological perspective, infidelity can be interpreted not only as a moral failure but also as a rational choice when individuals perceive that the benefits of extramarital relationships outweigh the associated risks. Research by Jevica et al. (2025) suggests that relationship recovery after infidelity largely depends on couples' ability to manage relational tensions, while those who fail to sustain their relationships tend to exhibit limited communication patterns and resistance to change. If not properly addressed, infidelity may ultimately lead to household disorganization, defined as the breakdown of fundamental family functions due to loss of trust and emotional disconnection between partners.

### C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology aimed at understanding and explaining the complexity of mate selection among Generation Z, the patterns of family intervention in that process, and the various types of relational challenges that emerge in modern romantic relationships. A qualitative methodology was chosen because the issues under investigation are subjective, complex, and strongly shaped by socio-cultural factors, thus requiring an in-depth exploration that cannot be measured quantitatively or reduced to numerical data. The descriptive aspect of this study is intended to provide a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the realities experienced by the participants, rather than to test a specific hypothesis.

Data were collected through non-participant interviews, a technique that focuses entirely on participants' verbal narratives without direct observation of their actions or everyday lives. This approach was selected because the research topics, including mate selection processes, family relationship dynamics, and relational problems, are highly personal and sensitive, thereby encouraging participants to be more open in discussing their experiences through private and introspective dialogue. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format using open-ended questions, allowing participants to express their experiences according to their own perspectives and interpretations.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing primarily on individuals from Generation Z who are currently or have previously been involved in the process of seeking a partner, whether through online platforms or traditional methods, and who have also interacted with their families regarding wedding arrangements. The collected information was then analyzed through thematic analysis, in which the researcher identified, grouped, and interpreted recurring patterns or common themes found in the interview transcripts. To ensure data validity, source triangulation and participant verification were employed, including sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations.

### D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Platform Design Philosophy and Rational Calculation in Online Ta'aruf\*\*

The Indonesian Online Ta'aruf Application (TOI) was established in late 2018 in response to the growing *hijrah* trend among young people, who had begun to become more selective in choosing life preferences based on Islamic values, including in the search for a life partner. As stated by its founder, Dzikri Zaki:

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“This application was designed at the end of 2018. At that time, the \*hijrah\* trend was still rising... In the end, it changed people’s way of thinking, behavior, and preferences when using a product. Starting from wanting to buy halal food... to wanting even the process of marriage to be halal, namely through *ta'aruf*.”

Initially, the conventional *ta'aruf* process tended to function as an exclusive facility that could only be accessed by individuals who had connections to religious teachers or particular Islamic study communities. TOI was created to transfer that real-world experience into the digital sphere in order to facilitate \**ta'aruf*\* for a broader Muslim community. This was further emphasized by Dzikri:

“The problem in the field is that not everyone can be facilitated to do \**ta'aruf*\*. As a result, *ta'aruf* became an exclusive facility... only enjoyed by certain people, such as those who had families or were part of particular study communities before they could engage in *ta'aruf*.. So that problem eventually led us to design the real-world experience and try to bring it into the virtual world.”

In its design, the platform structures the partner-search process in such a way that users can engage in rational calculation. Users are able to fill out their Curriculum Vitae (CV) in a specific manner and filter potential partners according to logical indicators such as age range, place of residence, employment history, and organizational background. Anisa Aulia Ulfah shared her experience:

“When it is placed online, the advantage is that we can fill in the CV directly in the application. So it only includes the important things... Then we can search for potential partners ourselves who seem to match our criteria.”

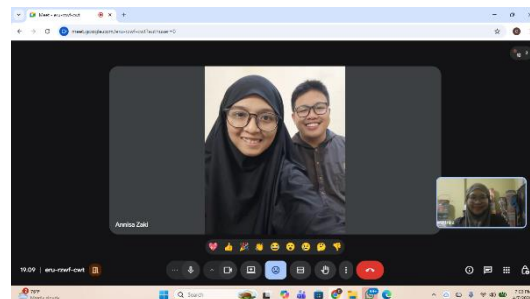


Figure 1. Researcher Interview with Zaki Dzikri, Founder and User of the Indonesian Online Ta'aruf Application, via Google Meet.

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

This digital system is considered to make it easier for users to prioritize logic and time efficiency, as they no longer have to wait for a third party (conventional intermediary) to express their interest in a candidate. According to Dzikri:

"Anyone who wants to meet someone can take action immediately without having to wait for a third party... We just open our phones, find their profile, send it, and that's it."

#### Systematic Filtering: An Effort to Minimize Physical Commodification

To avoid the superficial selection process, similar to scrolling through "shopping catalogs" (physical commodification) common on conventional dating apps, TOI modified the system to comply with Islamic law. Three main filters are applied to users:

1. Identity Verification: Users are required to register using their real data and National Identity Card (KTP) to minimize fake accounts or individuals with no serious intentions.

"We verify both KTP data. So, if someone's account doesn't match the data, doesn't match the KTP data, or doesn't have a photo... they can't be included in that list. So they can't become a member. That's the first filter."

2. Financial Commitment: There's an initial registration fee that serves as a commitment fee to filter out individuals who are simply "checking the waters" or playing around within the app.

"When someone wants to join, they have to pay the registration fee first... So, this is a kind of commitment fee, it's not a joke... That's the second filter."

3. Visual Protection (Blur Feature): Unlike other dating apps where photos are freely accessible like magazines, TOI automatically blurs users' photos. This is done to protect women's privacy and izzah (honor). New photos can only be accessed if both parties have agreed to proceed to the get-to-know-you stage (nadzor).

"That's to protect privacy... and also the woman's dignity... Because we know a woman's profile is like a magazine that can be opened by anyone at will if it's suddenly available and ultimately misused... So the people who see our faces are people we know and have agreed to see."

### **"Selling Value" Attributes and Shifting Mate Selection Patterns**

In this app's ecosystem, individuals strive to maximize their self-representation through written profiles. Based on the founder's observations, basic religious indicators (such as prayer observance) are a mandatory standard.

"On average, the very minimum is that religious obligations are fulfilled, at least with prayers, without any problems. I've almost never encountered friends who have successfully progressed to marriage who still have gaps in their prayers."

However, the attribute that has the highest and most verified selling point is the user's participation in the Premarital Class Institute. Premarital class alumni receive a special code/mark on their profile, which is a key consideration because it indicates their readiness for marriage.

"We collaborate with the premarital class institute... their graduates will have a special code... Later, their accounts will display a mark indicating they are premarital class alumni. That's also a consideration because having that mark indicates they have previously participated in premarital studies."

When evaluating profiles, Gen Z female users tend to be highly analytical. They often use the Q&A session (online/offline counseling) as a space to examine and clarify the prospective groom's (brother's) vision and mission, ensuring it's not merely normative or general.

"For example, if his vision is to create a Quranic family, we'll verify that it's true. We ask him about his activities, how he reads the Quran, and clarify it again during the online ta'aruf (introduction). It turns out during the counseling session, "Oh, this is really general. I think he hasn't imagined it yet... he's given it a chance to guide, that's what. That's an indicator of what's lacking."

The most significant shift in selection patterns is the increased active participation of women. In conventional ta'aruf, women often feel embarrassed or reluctant to put themselves forward first.

"Offline, it's more like a bit embarrassing, you know. And I don't think I'd be brave enough to meet someone."

On the other hand, this app changes that structure by providing a safe space, as evidenced by the high number of women who proactively submit their CVs first compared to men.

"And the fun fact is, in Ta'aruf Online Indonesia, women actually submit more CVs. In other words, they're more active. Which in the real world, that's a major obstacle."

#### Evaluation of Interaction and Founder Experience

Failures in the interaction process on this app generally occur not due to system errors, but rather due to the user's rational calculations. The process often stalls early when individuals feel a candidate's CV profile doesn't match their needs, when chemistry fails to build after the Q&A, or when there's a difference in impressions between text communication and the visual encounter during the nadzor (interaction meeting).

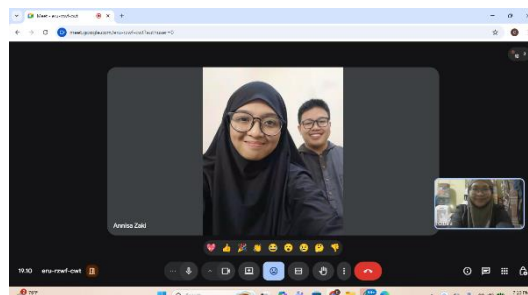


Figure 2. Researcher Interview with Annisa Aulia Ulfah, an online user of the Ta'aruf Online Indonesia (TOI) application on Google Meet.

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

"Yes, that's right, the chemistry wasn't right, or the needs they were looking for weren't there in the candidate... So when we met with the supervisor, now the interaction via text and in person, with their voice, and their communication style were a bit different. And that's where it all fell through."

The platform's success in maintaining the essence of rational and structured interactions is inseparable from the experience of its founders. Dzikri Zaki and Anisa Aulia Ulfah were early users of the TOI platform before they married. The two put the calculated and rational selection process they created into practice, ultimately finding each other and marrying through the Indonesian Ta'aruf Online app.

#### **Negotiation between Family Self-Esteem and Personal Choice Autonomy in Wedding Decision Making**

Based on interview data obtained from two sources, a bride and her parents, it is clear that the decision-making process regarding the wedding was not accompanied by conflict, but rather took place through a flexible, deliberative approach. Both individuals demonstrated a similar pattern of tension between their personal desires and the expectations of their families,

ultimately finding a solution through compromise, either explicitly stated or implicitly understood.

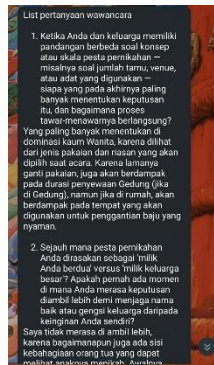


Figure 3. Structured Interview with a Married Woman Domiciled in Jakarta, Indonesia,  
Online via WhatsApp Message  
Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

According to the bride, her initial expression of personal freedom was reflected in her desire for a simple wedding with only a few guests. However, when faced with a “guest list that couldn’t be ignored,” she chose to respect her parents’ wishes. Their approach was a 50:50 principle. A compromise that balances the preferences of the bride, groom, and their parents while recognizing that “in reality, many factors need to be accommodated behind the scenes.”

The bride’s parents’ statements indicate that family pride was one factor at play, though not the only one. They specifically cited “reputation at work” as a reason for choosing to hold the wedding in a hall, but emphasized that it was not the primary consideration. Financial preparedness was a priority. Their statement that “the choice of venue wasn’t entirely influenced by family pride; it wasn’t the primary consideration” illustrates a series of factors ranked in order of priority to justify the choice from both a logical and social perspective.

Therefore, the interaction between family honor and individual freedom does not occur as a confrontation, but rather as a complex negotiation process involving compromise, personal independence is maintained in private matters (aesthetic choices, financial values), while the wishes of the family are integrated in public aspects (number of guests, choice of location). The two aspects reach a consensus expressed by both parties without regret indicating that the legitimacy of the choice does not arise because one party overpowers the other, but because the decision-making approach is considered fair by all parties involved.

### **Physical Interaction Deficit: LDM as a Structural Condition**

This couple is in a long-distance marriage because the husband manages the family business in Bekasi while the wife resides in Tasikmalaya. The husband's return times are irregular and unpredictable for the wife.

The main finding suggests that the physical distance resulting from a long-distance marriage is not offset by the quality of interactions when they do meet. When the husband

returns home, instead of experiencing emotional support, there is a psychological absence: he is often playing on his phone or going out with friends. As the wife stated:

"When my husband comes home, there's rarely any interaction; he's focused on his phone, and sometimes he goes out with his friends. So I often feel annoyed and irritated because I'm alone at home taking care of everything."



Figure 4. Structured Offline Interview with Mrs. Eneng, Mr. Nana's Ex-Wife

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Meanwhile, the husband views telephone communication as sufficient, and at home, he only communicates "normally" because he feels tired of the existing dynamics. This fundamental difference in perception continues to widen the emotional distance between them.

#### **Degradation in Interaction Quality: From Relational to Functional**

One of the most obvious indicators of relational vulnerability is the shift in conversation topics from personal and emotional matters to purely functional ones. In this couple, conversations revolve only around children and business, as the wife admits:

"We rarely share stories about our relationship anymore, we focus more on talking about the children or business... We haven't had serious conversations about each other's feelings since a conflict a few years ago."

The husband describes a similar situation: every attempt to have a serious discussion always ends in disagreement, so he decides to avoid it altogether. This situation leads to emotional withdrawal. The couple remains together officially, but their emotional connection has become dysfunctional, and the remaining interactions are purely practical.

#### **Emotional Emptiness and Escape Strategies**

Both men recognized a profound emotional emptiness despite being physically in the same location. Their respective ways of coping with this emptiness revealed a fundamental similarity: they both chose to avoid rather than confront or resolve the problem.

The wife turned her attention to household chores and cried silently, a reclusive response. In contrast, the husband chose to go out: socializing with friends or surfing social media. This pattern of outgoing behavior in the husband structurally created the opportunity for infidelity.

#### **Technology as an Opportunity Structure for Infidelity**

In Coleman's framework, infidelity requires not only encouragement but also opportunity. Digital technology and social media platforms serve as such opportunity structures. The wife

could clearly see her husband actively interacting with others, even witnessing him engaging in actions he should have avoided. The husband himself openly acknowledged this.:

"Yes, it does broaden things. I also find social media fun and comfortable."

This statement is an implicit comparison to the tense atmosphere at home, which she feels. Technology isn't the sole cause of infidelity, but rather a catalyst that connects unmet emotional needs within the marriage with opportunities for fulfillment outside.



Figure 5. Structured Interview between the Researcher and Mr. Nana, Mrs. Eneng's ex-husband, conducted online via WhatsApp video call.

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

### **Rational Calculation: Two Actors, Two Scales**

This finding directly supports the basic assumption of Coleman's Rational Choice Theory: each individual calculates costs and benefits differently, and these differences in calculations result in varying actions.

The wife decided not to have an affair because her calculations were more influenced by risks: pity for the child, fear of social embarrassment if caught, and emotional dependence on her husband. On the other hand, the husband considered the risk of being caught very low, while the benefits of an outside relationship were considered more significant. He even devised a strategy to mitigate the risks by over-fulfilling the child's material needs to avoid his wife's suspicion.

"At the time, I didn't think too much about it; I consciously knew it was wrong... but what I remember is the feeling of comfort and excitement."

This is a manifestation of Coleman's logic: a rational actor doesn't always act according to norms, but rather according to what he perceives as the optimal decision based on the information and values he holds.

### **Weakening Social Control as a Bracing Mechanism**

Coleman states that norms, reputation, and sanctions within a community serve as deterrents against deviant behavior. In this case, despite the presence of these controls, their strength was insufficient to deter the husband's actions.

The wife identified her children and religion as the strongest "deterrents" she had, but also acknowledged that even within her religious study group, there were friends who engaged in

infidelity, indicating that religious norms were not always reflected in actual behavior. The husband recognized these barriers but chose to continue with his actions because he felt the situation was under control and safe. This confirms that social control is only effective if individuals perceive the risk of sanctions as real and unavoidable.

### **Household Disorganization: A Process, Not an Event**

The key finding of these interviews was the confirmation that marital disorganization was not a sudden event, but rather a process that accumulated over years. The affair was the culmination of a long series of relationship deficiencies: worsening communication, widening emotional distance, and a gradual erosion of trust.

When the affair was revealed, the reactions of the two were strikingly different. The wife felt a profound breakdown in trust that remained unrecoverable despite the passage of time. The husband dismissed it as a problem that could be resolved with an apology, not even feeling that their marriage was fundamentally compromised.

"I think our relationship is still fine. We still live together, the kids are fine. What happens outside of that is my business, as long as I continue to meet my family's needs."

This statement reveals a drastic reduction in the meaning of marriage: from an emotional bond and shared commitment to a mere contract for material fulfillment. The wife ultimately chose divorce after waiting for the children to mature. Within Coleman's framework, this decision is also rational: when the costs of staying have exceeded the costs of separating, leaving is the optimal option.

James S. Coleman's Rational Choice Theory views individuals as goal-oriented agents who deliberately choose their actions after assessing the benefits and drawbacks of various options. From this perspective, a person's behavior is closely tied to their resources, both tangible and intangible, including social relationships, principles, and position within society, as well as the constraints imposed by the current social framework. Consequently, the choices an individual makes stem from a logical evaluation shaped by their desires, available opportunities, and the constraints they face.

By applying this lens, the overall dynamics of Generation Z marital relationships explored in this study, from the engagement phase to marriage and beyond, can be interpreted as a series of logical choices involving the evaluation of costs and benefits across various situations.

The three aspects discussed in this study the pre-marital period, the transition to marriage, and the post-marital period can be understood holistically through a single analytical perspective: each individual at each stage of marriage acts as a rational decision-maker, consciously and unconsciously weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the options presented to them. In other words, Coleman's Rational Choice Theory is not only applicable to explaining one instance of decision-making, but also serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding the complete journey of Generation Z's experience in marriage from choosing a partner, planning a wedding, to maintaining or ending the marital relationship.

During the pre-marriage period, various studies on the use of the Ta'aruf Online Indonesia (TOI) application clearly illustrate how the digital platform's layout functions as an institutional reflection of rational choice thinking. This application not only transforms traditional ta'aruf methods into an online environment, but also systematically organizes the matchmaking process so that users can make logical decisions through measurable features such as pre-

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determined Curriculum Vitae (CV) submissions and filtering mechanisms based on logical criteria such as age, geographic location, work experience, and affiliations. From Coleman's theoretical perspective, such a platform structure represents a type of resource externalization that allows individuals to increase their effectiveness in achieving their goals, specifically finding a partner who best aligns with their desires and principles while minimizing potential costs in terms of time and emotional involvement.

Even more interesting from an analytical perspective is that this platform has effectively shifted the selection criteria from physical characteristics (appearance) to social and spiritual qualities, which are viewed as credible assets. For example, individuals who complete a pre-marital course receive a unique code on their profile, which serves as a significant selling point in the perception of other users. This serves as a clear illustration of what Coleman describes as individual resource management, with those with greater verified religious social capital having a clear competitive advantage in the mate selection landscape. Furthermore, the platform's decision to introduce a commitment fee alongside identity verification serves as a method of raising the "entry price" for less serious participants, thus ensuring that only those mature enough to engage in the ta'aruf process with sincere intentions are allowed to proceed.

The shift in women's empowerment reflected in these results, with more women actively submitting their CVs than men, can also be understood through this theory. In traditional matchmaking, resource constraints, such as the lack of a safe environment for taking initiative, impose a very high "social cost" on women who want to take an active role. Online platforms significantly alter this cost framework by offering a degree of anonymity and an organized environment, significantly reducing the social costs associated with taking initiative. Consequently, the mindset of Generation Z women is evolving. Choices once constrained by social costs are now seen as the best option.

In the transition period leading up to marriage, research on the balance between family self-esteem and individual autonomy in wedding planning reveals a deeper aspect of Coleman's theory, specifically how the resources and interests of various parties influence each other within an integrated social framework. Coleman explains that within a social framework, each party possesses resources that are the focus of attention of others, and this interaction forms a system of interdependence. In wedding planning, the individual parties (the bride and groom) along with the collective parties (the family or parents) contribute diverse but interrelated interests and resources.

The study revealed that the bride initially desired a modest wedding with a limited guest list, a choice that reflected her financial situation and personal preferences. However, when faced with an "irreplaceable guest list," she chose to compromise by adopting a 50/50 approach. Analyzing this situation through the lens of rational choice theory, this compromise was not simply an act of surrender, but rather a strategically sound move after weighing all the pros and cons. The disadvantages of maintaining complete independence (which could lead to potential family discord, damage social relationships, and diminish the marriage's legitimacy in the eyes of society) were deemed to outweigh the disadvantages of meeting family expectations (which involved reducing the scale of the event).

The statement made by parents who cited "reputation at work" as a factor in choosing a hall for their wedding also merits similar scrutiny. In this context, social reputation serves as

an intangible asset that holds significance for the collective participants (the family). The choice of venue size and location serves as a way to maintain or enhance the family's social standing within the community. Although parents emphasized that financial preparedness was their primary focus, their recognition of reputational aspects suggests that their considerations were complex, balancing financial costs with social benefits simultaneously. The eventual outcome of a mutual agreement free from regret on both sides indicates that the negotiation process had reached a state of equilibrium. A situation in which the allocation of resources and interests among individual and collective participants is perceived as fair by all parties involved, so that the legitimacy of the decision arises not from the dominance of one party over another, but from a collective understanding of the fairness of the process.

In the post-marital period, insights into the characteristics of long-distance marriages that contribute to infidelity and relationship turmoil provide compelling yet complex support for Coleman's Rational Choice Theory. Here, the lack of physical connection, unbalanced by a strong emotional connection, creates what can be identified as a crisis of relational resources. Essential elements of marriage, such as emotional intimacy, trust, and deep dialogue, begin to gradually decline.

When a husband returns home and chooses to play on his phone or hang out with friends, while the wife reacts to her emotional emptiness by crying silently, both partners are, in reality, engaging in actions that are considered rational from their perspectives. Each adopts the method they believe is most effective in addressing the emotional gap that remains unresolved together. In Coleman's model, this illustrates the principle of prioritizing individual well-being when shared resources (marital closeness) are no longer adequately available.

A husband's decision to have an affair might also be seen as logical from Coleman's perspective, even though it is morally and socially unacceptable. He considers the chances of being discovered to be extremely small, while he considers the benefits, such as the excitement and emotional satisfaction of the affair, to far outweigh any potential risks. To reduce suspicion, he even strategizes to manage the risks by generously meeting the family's financial needs. His statement, "At the time, I didn't think much about it... but I remember the comfort, the thrill," does not contradict the theory; rather, it illustrates that rational thinking isn't always conscious and explicit; it can occur instinctively, leading individuals to seek pleasurable experiences and avoid discomfort based on an informal assessment of the pros and cons.

Conversely, a woman might decide not to have an affair based not only on ethical convictions but also because she assesses the consequences differently. Her concern for her children, anxiety about social disgrace if discovered, and emotional dependence on her partner create a framework of consequences too great to ignore. This is an excellent example of one of Coleman's key findings: two individuals facing seemingly similar situations can take completely opposite actions simply because they have different resources, perceptions of danger, and value systems. Norms related to religion and social relationships (such as children and religious study groups) act as controlling elements that increase the punishment for the wife's undesirable actions, whereas for the husband, these same controlling elements have little influence, because he sees the potential consequences as controllable and avoidable.

The wife's final decision to end her marriage after allowing her children time to grow up reflects a logical decision from Coleman's perspective. When the accumulated losses of

remaining in the marriage (emotional pain, loss of faith, and the marriage becoming merely a financial arrangement) outweigh the losses of separation (societal rejection of divorce, financial instability), leaving becomes the most rational decision. The time she waited until her children were adults further demonstrates the complexity of her thinking. She delayed divorce not because of hesitation, but because she considered other factors, including the impact on her children, in her decision-making.

In summary, the three stages of Generation Z's marital experiences analyzed in this study, from choosing a partner through digital platforms, to negotiating the balance between personal freedom and family dignity within the relationship, to the relational vulnerabilities that lead to chaotic household dynamics, are all presented within a consistent analytical framework. Coleman's Rational Choice Theory allows us to understand that behind every choice that may seem emotional, instinctive, or even illogical, lies the rational logic of an individual seeking to optimize his or her situation with the means at his or her disposal, within the constraints imposed by the social and institutional context in which they live.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

### **Rational Calculation and the Shift in Mate Selection Patterns in Online Ta'aruf**

The use of online ta'aruf applications has been shown not to encourage physical commodification or shallow emotional exchanges; rather, it directs users toward a highly rational and structured approach to partner selection. Through filtering systems such as identity verification, commitment fees, and visual protection (blur features), these platforms successfully minimize the kind of physical commodification commonly found in conventional dating apps. The shift in mate selection patterns is evident in the attributes considered as "value," which now emphasize preparedness for married life (such as premarital class certification). Additionally, the presence of a secure digital space significantly encourages women to be more proactive and analytical in choosing potential partners compared to conventional ta'aruf.

### **Compromise Between Personal Autonomy and Family Expectations in Marriage Preparation**

During the transition toward marriage, the negotiation process between family honor demands and personal autonomy does not occur confrontationally but is resolved through deliberation and flexible compromise. Couples and their parents adopt a fair middle-ground principle (50:50), where personal autonomy is maintained in the private domain (such as financial readiness and aesthetics), while family honor expectations are accommodated in the public domain (such as venue selection and number of guests). This consensus shows that wedding decision-making is based on a priority scale that balances the couple's financial logic with the family's social realities, without leaving any party feeling disadvantaged.

### **Interaction Deficit, Infidelity Opportunities, and Household Disorganization**

In the post-marriage phase, low intensity and poor quality of interaction directly create relational vulnerabilities that lead to household disorganization. The deficit in physical interaction due to long-distance marriage (LDM), compounded by the absence of psychological presence (gadget distractions) and the degradation of communication from relational to merely functional, triggers deep emotional emptiness. When this emptiness intersects with technology

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as a structure of opportunity and weak social control, it gives rise to deviant rational calculations such as a husband choosing to engage in infidelity because the perceived risk is low. This underscores that household disorganization is the cumulative result of a prolonged erosion of emotional bonds, rather than merely an isolated incident of sudden infidelity

Based on the conclusions above, several recommendations can be proposed. For individuals in the premarital phase, it is advisable to actively participate in formal marriage education to equip themselves with mental readiness and knowledge, which serve as key rational indicators in the selection process. For prospective couples and their families, it is recommended to prioritize openness and compromise in planning the wedding so that family social expectations do not compromise the couple's financial stability. Finally, for married couples especially those in long-distance marriages—it is highly recommended to consciously maintain psychological presence during time together by limiting social media distractions, and to proactively rebuild relational communication that focuses on emotional closeness in order to effectively minimize the risk of infidelity.

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