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Gen-Z Women's Perceptions of Marriage: An Analysis of Digital and Information Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The development of information and communication technology has influenced the dissemination of information by providing unlimited access to information on the internet and social media, including information about marriage. The ease of access to information has an impact on a person's perception or understanding, thus requiring digital literacy skills.

The study purpose was to determine the perceptions of marriage among Generation Z women by analyzing their digital literacy skills and the information they possess.

Materials and methods. The research method used is qualitative, with data collection conducted through a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation.

Results. The results show that information about marriage obtained from social media significantly influences Gen-Z women's perceptions of marriage. Some of them consider marriage to be unimportant or even frightening because they often receive negative information about marriage on social media, while others take the positive side of this information, believing that we must be smart in choosing a partner and preparing for marriage in order to achieve the marriage of our dreams.

Conclusions. The conclusion of this study is that digital literacy plays a very important role in shaping Gen-Z women's perceptions of marriage. In the context of marriage, this ability is crucial for distinguishing between accurate and misleading information, enabling Gen-Z women to make more mature and rational decisions regarding married life in a modern era that is heavily influenced by technology and social media.

Keywords: Ease of Access; Digital Literacy; Marriage Information; Perception; Gen Z Women.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has progressed rapidly and significantly. Based on the Communication and Information Technology Development Index designed by the Central Statistics Agency, there has been rapid growth in the ICT usage sub-index, indicating that ICT usage by the Indonesian people is increasing. The high rate of ICT usage is evidenced by the percentage of individuals using the internet, which also increased by 69.21% in 2023. This increase was triggered by the need for easy and fast access to information and the availability of increasingly widespread internet network infrastructure. (Direktorat Statistik Keuangan, Teknologi Informasi, dan Pariwisata, 2024).

The development of information and communication technology has influenced various aspects of society, such as social systems, political systems, and communication systems. The increasingly open communication system has made society more free to express their opinions to the public through the media without restrictions (Wiryany et al., 2022). The development of information and communication technology has also had an impact on ease of access to information. It has become easier for people to search for and access information through digital platforms, providing greater opportunities for learning and self-development. The development of information and communication technology has also made it easier and faster for people to connect and share experiences with others in different places (Salsabila Lubis & Padli Nasution, 2023).

Easy access to information also has an impact on people's perceptions of that information. Perception is the process of selectively interpreting assumptions about observed objects. Perception is also defined as the dynamics of a person's response when receiving external stimuli through the five senses. A person's knowledge, experience, emotions, and personality can influence their perception. Thus, a person can determine whether something is good or bad, useful or useless, and important or unimportant. New information obtained by a person from their environment can cause their perceptions to change or develop (Akbar, 2015). From this definition, it is clear that a person's perception is flexible depending on the information they receive. Therefore, easy access to information is likely to change people's perceptions about a particular issue.

The impact of information technology development has also made it easy for people to share information via the internet or digital platforms such as social media. One type of information that has recently been widely shared on the internet and social media is information about marriage. Marriage is the beginning of a new life for two people who previously lived alone and then began living together (Malisi, 2022) . There is a wide range of information about marriage shared on social media, from good to bad. This information can certainly influence people's perceptions of marriage.

One piece of information about marriage that has recently become a trend is early marriage. Early marriage is a marriage that is conducted before the age specified by applicable regulations. Early marriages often do not last long due to the couple's lack of maturity and mental, physical, and emotional readiness (Fitri et al., 2024). Based on Undang-undang Nomor 16 tahun 2019 which is an amendment from Undang-undang Nomor 1 tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan, the minimum age for marriage for men and women is the same, namely 19 years old. (UU No. 16 Tahun 2019). This provision should serve as a warning to the public regarding the appropriate time or age to get married. The trend of early marriage has created a new perception of marriage among the public, making it necessary to educate people and promote literacy in order to filter good and accurate information on social media.

The lack of digital literacy among the public, especially among teenagers of learning age, has led to the potential for misuse of social media and misunderstandings in capturing and receiving information from social media. For this reason, educational institutions play a role in providing digital literacy education and habits through a more adaptive and innovative curriculum in order to improve students' skills in accessing, selecting, obtaining, and understanding information from the internet, one of which is through e-learning-based learning (Amri et al., 2021).

Experts and policymakers agree that digital literacy needs to be implemented in the education process because rapid technological developments have changed the way humans interact, learn, and work. Freedom of access to information has given rise to several problems, such as the proliferation of false information, making education necessary to improve digital literacy skills. In other words, the integration of digital literacy into the education system is not only a technical necessity, but also an important social and policy responsibility in shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also responsive to the challenges of the digital world (Ahmad, 2022).

Nowadays, it is important for the public to continue to understand digital literacy in order to cope with developments in information technology and respond to the wide variety of information spread on social media. Digital literacy is the ability to use technology and information from digital devices appropriately in various situations. Digital literacy also refers to searching for, evaluating, creating, and sharing information on digital platforms such as computers and mobile devices (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). Digital literacy also includes understanding the use of information technology, information security, and how to use technology productively. Good digital literacy skills can help people sort and select information that is good and useful for their lives.

When it comes to information related to marriage, women are one of the groups that are most vulnerable and easily influenced by the information they receive, especially young women. These young women belong to Generation Z, those born between 1995 and 2010. They were born at a time when information technology was becoming increasingly sophisticated. Having been exposed to information technology from an early age, Generation Z tends to have characteristics that differ from previous generations. Generation Z acts more quickly, does not think things through, seeks pleasure to the detriment of work and entertainment, divides their attention, does not want to understand things, and

lacks consequential thinking. Generation Z is also very dependent on search engines, but they are less able to comment on the validity of the information they obtain (Hastini et al., 2020). Currently, Generation Z is the generation that is most active in using the internet and social media to access the information they need.

Generation Z women's perceptions of marriage are shaped through a complex process of interpretation, influenced not only by cultural and religious values but also by digital experiences and the intense flow of information on social media. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z tends to view marriage as a personal choice that requires emotional, financial, and psychological readiness, rather than merely a social obligation or cultural norm. This shift in perspective indicates a transformation in the meaning of marriage from a traditional institution to a reflective and rational life decision.

The phenomenon of the "marriage is scary" narrative, which is widely found on social media, is a clear illustration of how Gen Z women's perceptions of marriage are often colored by anxiety and fear. Exposure to digital content that depicts domestic conflict, divorce, violence in relationships, and gender role inequality contributes to the formation of negative perceptions of marriage (Riswandi et al., 2025). Information about the negative aspects of marriage on social media comes not only from personal experiences, but also from the experiences of others that are widely shared on digital media, creating collective fear and doubt about the relevance of marriage in life.

In addition, Gen Z women's perceptions of marriage are also closely related to issues of independence and gender equality. Many women believe that marriage has the potential to limit their self-actualization, especially when the relationships portrayed on social media show the dominance of one party. Exposure to such content encourages Gen Z women to be more critical and selective in their understanding of marriage, and to prioritize happiness, mental health, and personal autonomy before deciding to get married.

In this increasingly advanced digital age, where information is easily accessible to the public through social media, there is a high risk of hoaxes or misinformation. The amount and variety of information currently available on social media is increasing, but the accuracy of this information remains unclear. When someone is presented with false or even misleading information that is packaged in an emotional and serious manner, it can be difficult for them to verify the truth and understand the context of the information (Gobang et al., 2024). Such misinformation can lead to misunderstandings and change a person's perception of something. In the example of marriage, hoaxes spread on social media influence a person's perception of marriage, giving rise to new thoughts, desires, or aspirations about marriage.

The lack of ability of Generation Z, especially women, to comment on the validity of information they receive from social media leads to the possibility of misunderstanding or misperception of information. Therefore, this study aims to determine the perception of marriage among Generation Z women by analyzing their digital literacy and information skills. The research question raised in this study is how the digital literacy and information skills of Generation Z women influence their perception of marriage.

Several researchers have conducted studies on marriage information literacy with various research topics, such as the 2021 study by Fransesco Agnes Ranubaya, which discusses the importance of digital literacy in sexuality education in the context of Catholic marriage. The development of digital technology makes it important to learn digital literacy in order to understand and use information in various formats sourced from various digital media. This study presents various digital literacy media that can be used to obtain information about sexuality education in a general context as well as in the context of Catholic marriage. This study was conducted using qualitative analysis through a documentation and critical analysis approach. The results of the study indicate that digital literacy is very important in providing the correct understanding of sexuality education in the context of Catholic marriage.

The next study was conducted by Muhammad Ichrom et al. in 2023, which discussed improving literacy on marriage law to prevent child marriage. The study aimed to improve literacy on child marriage issues so as to raise students' awareness to prevent marriage. This study used the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. The research subjects were students of SMK Ma'arif NU

1 in Semarang City. This study was service-oriented so that the results obtained could improve participants' understanding of child marriage issues in the vocational school environment and formulate solutions together.

Another study discussing marriage information literacy is a study entitled "Socialization of Early Marriage Prevention Through Financial Planning Literacy for the Future." This community service research aims to improve students' financial literacy as an effort to prevent early marriage. The rampant trend of early marriage among students makes this kind of socialization important in order to provide credible information about the importance of marriage and the negative impacts of early marriage, one of which is financial unpreparedness. The research or assistance methods included workshops, training, and financial literacy campaigns located at MTSN 4 Nganjuk. The results of this research or community service showed an increase in financial literacy among students, awareness and active participation of students in early marriage prevention activities, and the emergence of positive changes in student attitudes and behavior.

Furthermore, there is another community service study that discusses efforts to prevent early marriage through local wisdom literacy in primary and secondary education. This study, conducted by Ratna Restapaty and Faradilla Iedliany in 2022, aims to build character and increase knowledge among teenagers through a literacy movement that involves storytelling with female protagonists. This activity is one of the solutions to prevent the increase in underage marriages in South Kalimantan. The results of the study have not shown optimal progress in improving and instilling values in women to be able to reject early marriage. The participation of government officials, parents, and community leaders is needed to help optimize these activities.

Based on previous research, this study offers something new with a topic that raises the perception of marriage among Generation Z women, a group that grew up in the digital technology era. Previous studies have more often discussed the topic of marriage in the context of younger generations, or in traditional and general sociological dimensions. By focusing on Generation Z, this study seeks to understand the changes in perception influenced by the rapid and intense flow of information through social media and digital platforms. This approach is important given how technology has changed the younger generation's views and expectations of relationships and the institution of marriage.

In addition, the selection of Generation Z as the research subject adds novelty to this study due to its relevance to current social dynamics. This generation differs from previous generations in terms of how they interact with information and technology. They grew up with widespread internet access and the use of social media as their main source of information. Therefore, this study not only offers new insights into perceptions of marriage in a modern context, but also contributes to an understanding of how digital literacy and new media culture shape the worldview of Generation Z, especially women, in terms of the institution of marriage

METHOD

This study uses qualitative research methods, namely research conducted naturally or naturally, the results of which are intended to understand meaning, uniqueness, construct phenomena, and discover hypotheses. The research approach used is phenomenological, which aims to identify the essential phenomena experienced by participants based on data collection through participant observation. Data collection techniques were carried out using the triangulation method, which is a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2021). The subjects of this study were students and young workers who had concerns or interests regarding the topics discussed. In the data collection process, observations were made by looking at and observing the responses or comments of Gen-Z women to several pieces of information or posts on social media discussing marriage, both in a positive and negative context. Interviews were conducted on several research samples by asking 23 questions aimed at exploring the extent of the informants' digital literacy, then based on their level of digital literacy, the extent to which information about marriage on social media could influence their perceptions of marriage was explored. The data collection method through documentation study was carried out by understanding and analyzing the findings that had been found in previous studies discussing similar topics.

The sampling method used was purposive sampling, taking informants from students and young workers nearby who were known to have concerns relevant to the issues raised in the study. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four stages: data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation studies; data reduction by summarizing and selecting the information most relevant to the discussion; data display in the form of categorization tables to facilitate understanding of the data; and conclusion drawing/verification as the final result of the research (Fiddien, 2023).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Information literacy can be understood as a set of skills that involve a person's ability to identify information needs, find relevant sources of information, evaluate their credibility and validity, and organize that information logically to be used as an effective solution to a problem. More than that, information literacy also includes the ability to communicate the results of that information search to others clearly and effectively (Burhan & Pradana, 2022). In this increasingly digital world, information literacy skills are not limited to technical mastery in searching for and using information, but also include a critical understanding of how information is produced, disseminated, and used in a social context. Specifically, digital literacy is defined as the ability to evaluate and understand trustworthy online content, as well as the skills to convey and manage information through various digital formats and media. This includes a basic understanding of digital technology, computer literacy, and information literacy, which enables a person to adapt and communicate effectively in the digital world (Fajri & Aisiah, 2022).

In the context of discussing marriage, information literacy and digital literacy are important references because the increasing amount of information spread on the internet, especially social media, makes it increasingly difficult to verify the accuracy of information. Therefore, in order to ascertain the accuracy of information, one must have good information and digital literacy skills. However, adequate information and digital literacy skills do not guarantee that someone will be wise in sorting and processing information. This is because the source of information understanding is rooted in perception. In interviews conducted with a number of informants who were believed to have good information and digital literacy skills, new perspectives on marriage were found to have emerged from the understanding of information from social media. Among these new understandings are the following:

a. Understanding Marriage

Generation Z women have their own perspective on marriage based on the roles, obligations, and rights of women in a marriage. Based on interviews conducted with several Generation Z women, marriage is viewed as a serious relationship that binds two individuals with a deeper purpose than just love. Some of them understand that marriage is not just about feelings, but also a commitment to realizing a shared life goal. Marriage is also seen as a means to develop one's potential with the support of a partner, and both are jointly responsible for contributing to the relationship. These aspects make marriage more than just an emotional relationship, but also a means to achieve goals that would be difficult to achieve alone.

Other Generation Z women see marriage as a "group effort" in which there are rights and obligations that must be fulfilled by both parties. As one informant stated:

"In my opinion, marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman who are ready in all aspects, whether financially, emotionally, or otherwise. Essentially, I see marriage as a team effort in which there are responsibilities, obligations, and rights that must be fulfilled by both parties."

In this understanding, couples are considered to be financially, emotionally, and psychologically prepared to face the challenges of living together. The willingness to support each other and fulfill responsibilities is key to maintaining a balanced and harmonious relationship. This balance creates space for both partners to grow and help each other achieve common goals.

It is also important to note that understanding of marriage is often shaped by life experiences and the surrounding environment, such as family, social media, and other social interactions. This knowledge can be limited, so a person's view of marriage can be greatly influenced by what they observe and learn from those around them. For many people, marriage is something they understand

gradually as they grow older and gain life experience. However, there is an awareness that marriage involves two different individuals. Each partner comes with a different background, personality, and habits, but they are committed to living together in a bond. These differences are not only understood as challenges, but also as riches that can enrich the relationship, if faced in a healthy and understanding manner.

Overall, the informants viewed marriage as a new path in life that was full of challenges and opportunities for personal and mutual growth. Although their understanding of marriage may have been limited, the essence of this relationship was the readiness and willingness to live together with mutual respect, understanding, and support. With clear goals and commitment, marriage became a means to achieve a more meaningful and rewarding life.

In line with their understanding of the different meanings of marriage, Generation Z women also have different views on the importance of marriage or getting married. These diverse views are shaped by personal perspectives, needs, readiness, and cultural or religious contexts. For some people, marriage is very important because it is considered a necessity of life, a fulfillment of love, and a religious commandment that must be carried out. They see marriage as a way to protect themselves from harmful behavior and as a means to achieve life goals with a supportive partner. In addition, marriage is also seen as a way to create a good next generation and continue family values. As expressed by one of the informants as follows.

"Quite important, if viewed from a religious perspective, it is a form of worship. If viewed from a human relationship perspective, by getting married, we can build a family that will accompany us throughout our lives." Another informant expressed a similar opinion, saying, "(Marriage) is very important. It is a religious commandment, fulfills our need for affection, and restrains us from doing things that are harmful."

The link between the importance of marriage and religion was also questioned by one of the informants. Many believe that marriage is a form of worship, a way to get closer to God, and an obligation that must be fulfilled as part of their religious beliefs. However, there were informants who questioned whether marriage was the only way to worship God. This informant feels that there are many other ways to worship and that marriage is not the only way to practice religious beliefs.

On the other hand, there is a more skeptical view of marriage, especially among those who feel they are not ready or are not interested in long-term relationships. For them, marriage is not always a priority in life. They tend to focus on independence and feel capable of living their lives without getting married. This view reflects changing social values, where happiness and self-fulfillment no longer depend solely on the institution of marriage, but can be achieved through other paths in life.

In addition, there is a fear of marriage driven by increasing problems in marital relationships, such as divorce and domestic conflict. This fear, often referred to as "marriage is scary," makes some people reluctant to marry because they are concerned about the risks involved. However, despite their fears, they also acknowledge that marriage can be enjoyable if they find the right partner, who can provide a sense of security and happiness. One informant expressed the following opinion:

"In my opinion, marriage isn't that important these days. Because of the many problems that arise from marriage, I personally am afraid to get married haha, marriage is scary. But I think it would be nice to meet the right person."

For some Generation Z women, marriage is still considered important, but with various nuances and perspectives. For those who view it as a religious obligation and an emotional need, marriage is very meaningful. However, for those who emphasize independence and self-fulfillment without a partner, marriage may not be so urgent. Changes in social and cultural values also influence views on marriage, creating space for broader discussion about the relevance and purpose of marriage in modern times.

b. The Influence of Social Media and Digital Information Sources

Women of Generation Z tend to use social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter/X as their main platforms for finding information about marriage. They use these media because of their interactive and visual nature, allowing them to access easily digestible content, such as videos, infographics, or short stories about marriage experiences. Although social media is their main source, some Gen-Z women still rely on online news as a complementary source of information. They use

news sites to read more formal and in-depth articles, such as wedding guides from a cultural or legal perspective, global wedding trends, or even news about wedding-related topics that are currently trending. In other words, while social media provides them with quick access to daily information, online news serves as a more comprehensive and in-depth source of information.

Views or perceptions of marriage shaped by social media vary from person to person, depending on how often they are exposed to information on these platforms. For those who rarely use social media, their understanding of marriage is mostly gained from personal experience or their immediate environment. This means they are not greatly influenced by the narratives that often appear in the virtual world. As expressed by one of the informants below.

"Yes, at first I thought marriage could happen because two people loved each other and wanted to continue their lives together. But it turns out that marriage is deeper and more meaningful than that, as there are goals of marriage that can be achieved together."

Social media plays a big role in shaping perceptions about marriage, but two opposing sides are often presented. On the one hand, there are beautiful stories about love, happiness, and success in marriage, while on the other hand, there are also many negative narratives such as conflict, divorce, or unhappy marriages. For some people, their social media feeds more often show the bad side of marriage, which affects their view of the institution. This creates fears, such as "marriage is scary," which makes some people hesitate to get married. Negative narratives on social media, such as problems related to marriage, create fear and a desire to avoid commitment. The phrase "marriage is scary," which has been popping up a lot lately, reminds many people that marriage is not an easy path in life. Those who are frequently exposed to this narrative begin to question whether marriage is really important in their lives or whether it is better to live without getting married. The influence of social media in this case is quite significant, especially when the negative side is more dominant. This concern was expressed by one of the informants as follows.

"There are two sides to social media, right? The good side and the bad side. My social media is filled with negative issues about marriage. The phrase "marriage is scary" has been popping up lately, and it seems to be encouraging me not to get married."

However, for some informants, their understanding of marriage gained through social media does not always align with their personal experiences. Although they often see the negative side of marriage on social media, they do not always feel or experience the same things directly. This creates a gap between what they see in the virtual world and the reality they face. Ultimately, their perceptions of marriage are not entirely influenced by what they see on social media.

When it comes to shaping perceptions of marriage, social media has a significant influence on views about marriage, but its impact varies greatly depending on how often someone is exposed to it and how they respond to the information they receive. For those who rarely use social media, views on marriage may remain neutral or traditional. However, for those who are frequently exposed to negative narratives, marriage can feel more frightening and challenging. Nevertheless, personal experiences and immediate surroundings remain the main determining factors in shaping individuals' understanding of the meaning and importance of marriage.

c. The Role of Influencers and Online Content in Shaping Perceptions

In addition to the information generally presented by various sources on the internet and social media, there are also several influencers or public figures who specifically discuss or create content about marriage and family. This content can also influence the perceptions of Generation Z women in terms of their understanding of marriage. Among the public figures they follow are Ustadz Felix Siauw and Dewi Nur Aisyah, who provide a positive perspective on marriage. According to them, marriage provides opportunities for individuals to continue to grow because there is support from their partner and shared goals to achieve. These public figures are considered to have a significant influence in inspiring others about the benefits and importance of marriage. From their teachings, one can learn about the importance of togetherness and support in achieving one's full potential. This was revealed by the following informant.

"There are (influential figures), such as Ustadz Felix Siauw and Dewi Nur Aisyah. (Their influence) is quite significant. From them, I learned that through marriage, individuals can continue to

develop their full potential because they have a shared goal and a partner who is always there to support them."

In addition, other informants mentioned that their understanding of marriage was also influenced by well-known families such as the Fadil Jaidi family, who showed the positive side of married life. For some people, this family content provides hope that marriage is not always negative or problematic, but can be an enjoyable and constructive relationship. This view can help alleviate the concerns that often arise from negative narratives about marriage on social media. As acknowledged by one informant, namely "(influencer) The Fadil Jaidi family. When you see their family content, there is a little hope that marriage isn't that bad, maybe."

However, not everyone actively follows influencers or public figures who discuss marriage. Some people admit that they do not specifically follow anyone on social media who discusses marriage, and some cannot even remember whether they have ever followed such topics. This shows that social media is not the only source of information for everyone, and many individuals rely more on their personal environment or direct experiences to understand the concept of marriage.

d. The Importance of Digital Literacy in Understanding Wedding Information on Social Media

Digital literacy is one of the skills that Generation Z women must have in order to interpret information about marriage more wisely. From the perspective of several informants, digital literacy plays an important role in helping to understand information related to marriage. Without this skill, the information available on various digital platforms will be useless because it cannot be implemented in real life. Especially in today's digital age, the ability to sort and understand information circulating on social media is crucial, especially when that information relates to major topics such as marriage.

Information circulating on social media also helps many people realize that marriage is not a simple matter. There are many dynamics that can occur in this relationship, and knowing this from the outset makes them more aware and prepared. Information about marital problems that appears on social media provides new insights into the challenges they may face in the future. With greater exposure from social media and experiences in their surroundings, those who are more open to information realize that marriage is not just about love, but also about the great challenges that must be faced together. Digital literacy, in this case, helps them sort out which information is relevant and can be applied in preparing for marriage.

Digital literacy also helps individuals not only access information, but also critique and evaluate the content they encounter on social media. Digital literacy provides the ability to understand that social media often presents a curated version of a person's life, which does not always reflect reality. This understanding helps individuals avoid the pitfalls of social comparison, which can negatively impact their perceptions of marriage. In addition, digital literacy also involves the skill of identifying information that is manipulative or biased. Much of the marriage content on social media may be influenced by sponsors, hidden advertisements, or specific agendas, which subtly influence how users view products, services, or even the concept of marriage itself. With good digital literacy, individuals can identify the interests behind a piece of content, understand its context, and make wiser decisions about their marriage based on truly objective and valid information.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study show that digital literacy plays a very important role in shaping Generation Z women's perceptions of marriage. In an era where social media is the main source of information, the ability to evaluate, sort, and understand digital content is essential. Information about marriage disseminated on digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter/X is often presented in an idealized or manipulative manner, so without digital literacy skills, individuals are vulnerable to negative influences and unrealistic expectations. Digital literacy skills help individuals to critically evaluate the content they consume, understand the biases that may be contained in the information, and avoid the pitfalls of social comparison. Gen Z women, who are active on social media, need these skills to filter relevant information and form a more balanced and realistic perception of marriage. Digital literacy also enables them to not only be passive consumers, but also act as wiser and more critical communicators in conveying information related to marriage. The importance of

digital literacy is not limited to access to information, but also how that information is managed, understood, and applied in everyday life. In the context of marriage, this ability is crucial for distinguishing between accurate and misleading information, enabling Gen Z women to make more mature and rational decisions regarding married life in a modern era that is heavily influenced by technology and social media.

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