

# What Does It Mean to Be Single in Indonesia? Religiosity, Social Stigma, and Marital Status Among Never-Married Indonesian Adults

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## Abstract

The increasing number of never-married individuals has become a global phenomenon. Like many Asian countries, the sociocultural standard in Indonesia defines being married as a desirable social achievement, which leaves single adults vulnerable to derogation. Religiosity is also highly valued in Indonesian society, to the extent that those who show religious attributes tend to be positively regarded. This study aims to describe how Indonesian society defines the status and to explore the role of religiosity in overcoming its negative stigma. This is a narrative literature review study of relevant published literature from the last two decades. Our literature analysis showed that religiosity may mitigate the effect of being undervalued both by increasing the capacity to cope and by providing socially valued attributes that are regarded positively by Indonesian society. However, there is a risk that although singles can use religiosity as a primary coping mechanism to manage their social difficulties, society as a whole does not undergo genuine cultural shifts toward accepting a later age for marriage or singlehood as life choices. Although future studies are needed to comprehensively address the issues, the social acts of reducing stigma toward Indonesian singles are urgently needed.

## Keywords

Indonesia, religiosity, religious coping, social stigma, single stigma, never-married adults

## Introduction

There is a global trend to later marriage and more people choosing to remain single. Among Americans, for example, the percentage of never-married individuals aged 35 years and above has risen sharply to nearly 14% for men and more than 10% for women during the period 1980 to 2010 (Elliott, Krivickas, Brault, & Kreider, 2010). The numbers of American singles aged 18 years and above are gradually increasing from 99.6 million in 2011 to 109 million in 2015, of which approximately 53% are women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, 2016). It is also noted that 61% to 63% of those who are not married in America are never-married individuals. A similar pattern is also found in Australia, where the marriage rate fell by approximately 7.8% during 2012 to 2015, followed by a gradual increase in cohabitation prior to marriage (which accounted for up to 81% of all marriages in 2015) and increasing median marriage ages both for men and women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In 1990, the median marriage age for men in Australia was 28.2 years and for women 25.9 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012), whereas in 2015, median age of marriage was 31.8 and 29.8 years for men and women, respectively

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Similar trends are also occurring in Europe (Corselli-Nordblad & Gereoffy, 2015). Most Asian countries are experiencing a similar trend yet not to the same degree as in Western countries (Jones & Yeung, 2014). The highest rates of singlehood are found in Taiwan, followed by South Korea, Japan, and Myanmar.

In Indonesia, although the number of never-married individuals is lower than international statistics, it appears that the rates of remaining single have been increasing over the last decade (Himawan, Bambling, & Edirippulige, 2017; Hull, 2002; Jones, 2007, 2010; I. Utomo, 2003). Recent census results in Indonesia showed that the age of marriage has increased approximately 3 years between 1970 and 2010

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(Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010; Jones, 2010), with a 3-fold increase of never-married women aged 35 to 39 years in 2005 compared with those in 1970 (Jones, 2010). Hull (2002) predicts that in three decades, Indonesia may be among the highest in the rate of singlehood in Asia. This may be partly due to a declining birthrate and an aging population. Other styles of relationships such as *de facto* or casual relationships may become more common if Indonesian family policy and law provides greater recognition and legal protection for nonmarital relationships and their children. However, at this stage, these changes would represent a significant challenge to the conservative social values of Indonesian society.

Therefore, individuals who delay marriage or chose not to marry are perceived as not meeting sociocultural expectations and may experience negative social and psychological impacts. Despite the fact that negative stigma toward singles is found in almost every society in the world (DePaulo & Morris, 2006), the expression of the stigma in the society may vary. For example, although personal privacy and boundaries are well respected in Western communities, it is often considered to be normal in Indonesia to ask for personal information, including the age and marital status (Himawan, 2018). As a result, attention is immediately drawn to a person's single status (Situmorang, 2007), which will result in questions and potential judgment if they are in their mid-20s and onward.

However, demonstrated religiosity may be a socially accepted excuse not to be married or to delay marriage. For many singles, articulating a religious rationale for being single can assist in managing the social pressure and psychological distress they may experience. Guided by the theory of basic human need, which highlights the importance of having reliable relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), religiosity may even compensate feelings of loneliness for singles as it provides an alternative target for attachment to meet emotional needs (Kirkpatrick, 1992). Due to the favorable way religious individuals are perceived (Himawan, Bambling, & Edirippulige, 2018b; Hull, 2016), there may be less discrimination and stereotyping of such people due to single status. Studies have shown, however, that when one's religious motive is predominantly to achieve more mundane goals such as social approval and protection, then their psychological well-being will be negatively affected with increased risk of depression and anxiety (i.e., Navara & James, 2005).

### *Aims of the Study*

The aims of this study are to explore Indonesian cultural perception toward marriage and to explore the effectiveness of the religious coping style used by single people to manage negative sociocultural perceptions as one example of a socio-cultural response to the problem of singlehood. This narrative review was based on the relevant published literature about singlehood in Indonesia, supported by relevant studies within Asian and Western scopes. This study indicates that

religiosity may play both adaptive and maladaptive ways as one of the coping strategies for singles, depending on their motives of being religious.

## **Method**

A database search was conducted through following databases: PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. Keywords were developed that combined Asian context, singlehood, Indonesia, and religiosity. Given the dynamic nature of Asian cultures, the focus was contemporary studies from the years 2000 to 2017. Qualitative and quantitative studies, literature reviews, and cross-sectional empirical studies for never-married heterosexual singles were included in the analysis. However, studies of single parents, divorced, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are excluded to maintain the clear scope of the study.

The word "singlehood" produced 87 hits, whereas keyword "never married" accounts for 181 number of hits. Seven studies were identified that compared single women in many Asian countries, including Indonesia, which were included. Several studies examining singlehood in many Asian countries such as Singapore, China, and Japan were indented and used as supplementary material. The key concepts and themes of the studies are discussed as a narrative style review.

This article is generally divided into three parts. First, the contextual definition of single is discussed to set a common ground for further discussion. Second, the discussion is focused on the interplay between social perceptions and reactions toward never-married adults. Finally, the article is focused on the possible adaptive and maladaptive roles of religiosity for singles, followed by conclusion and recommendation.

## **Defining Single**

Being single can be defined both as a legal and social constructs, with considerable overlap as both constructs reflect an accepted set of values as to the definition of marriage (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Legally, singlehood is defined as the status of adults who are not currently married including divorced or widowed. From the social perspective, singlehood is defined as those who are not in a romantic relationship. According to Indonesian law (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia nomor 1 tahun 1974 tentang perkawinan), Indonesia generally acknowledges the monogamous type of marriage in which marriage must be exclusively between one man and one woman. Under certain circumstances (the wife has permanent disability, cannot fulfill the role as a wife, or cannot have children), polygamy is legally permitted with the consent of the wife. Furthermore, in Chapter 7 of Indonesian marriage laws (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia nomor 1 tahun 1974 tentang perkawinan), the minimum ages an individual may marry without parental consent are 16 for women and 19 for men. Thus,

those who are single by law can be defined as those who are not married after these ages.

Indonesian society defines singlehood beyond simply the absence of a life partner and as being a sign of some deficiency and as being an undesirable state. It is through this social definition that most singles experience being labeled with undervalued derogatory stereotype. DePaulo and Morris (2011) found that singles are targeted with a derogatory stereotype as marrying does not simply make someone “unsingle” but rather denotes a highly desirable social status change. Singles are seen as people who have not yet achieved, or as being unable to achieve, this status. The reasons for not achieving marriage for longer term, singles may be regarded as an indication of deficits within the individual rather than being a result of complex social and individual factors (Himawan, Bambling, & Edirippulige, 2018a). However, there is less stigma for those who are in a serious courtship that can be expected to lead to marriage (Slonim, Gur-Yaish, & Katz, 2015).

This is in contrast to Western countries, where cohabiting couples are not considered single and given a marriage-like status such as being in a *de facto* relationship, and in many countries, this comes with legal recognition of the cohabiting relationship and the rights of both parties. The legal system in Indonesia does not recognize cohabiting relationships, and the practice has a negative social definition (Himawan et al., 2017). In fact, cohabiting couples in Indonesia may be subject to legal and social sanctions if they come to the attention of authorities (Fachrudin, 2016).

A more objective and measurable distinction needs to be constructed to define singlehood. Kaiser and Kashy (2005) differentiated singles into two categories: normative and nonnormative singles. Using data from Western countries, normative singles refer to individuals aged 36 years or younger who are on track to marriage, whereas nonnormative singles are those who are 36 years old and above and are not on track to marriage or beyond the expected age of marriage.

The extent that international findings regarding the normative age for marriage can be applied to Indonesia is questionable due to cultural differences. There is enough evidence (i.e., Himawan, 2018; Jones, 2007; Situmorang, 2007), however, to conclude that for women the upper end of the normative marriage age is the early 20s, and the nonnormative age range is from their later 20s onwards. There are insufficient data to accurately determine the normative marriageable age for men. The fact that more studies are focused on single women may suggest a greater social stigma for unmarried females in Indonesian society.

## Being Single in a Social Context

### *The Cultural Perception of Marriage*

Four themes emerge as contributing factors that shape current perceptions of marriage in Indonesia: equal education

and career opportunities between men and women, the availability and accessibility of alternative marriage form, the impact of technology, and the remaining belief of the universality of marriage.

*Equal access to education and career between men and women.* Greater access to education and to economic self-sufficiency have provided more women with options other than early marriage (Himawan et al., 2017). Women's participation in the workforce, for instance, has increased sharply, and as of 2015, nearly 55% women were employed (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2016).

The relationship between economic growth and later marriage is a globally recognized phenomenon (Furstenberg, 2015). It is understandable through the fact that women with higher educational levels and career positions consequently set higher expectations for their preferred partner. Many women express their reluctance to marry lower income men, concerned that those men's predominant marital motive may be only to gain from the women's wealth (Vignato, 2012). In fact, one of the main reasons of the increasing phenomenon of singlehood is not because an imbalanced proportion between males and females in society, but rather the shortage of single men who can meet the expectations of such single women (Situmorang, 2007; Yeung & Hu, 2016).

*Availability and accessibility of emotional and sexual fulfillment outside marriage.* For many people, marriage is no longer regarded as a sacred process, in which for example sexual intercourse is socially sanctioned, although the general society is still considering it as taboo (Himawan, 2018). It is becoming more common for courtship among young adults to involve sexual activity although there is little discussion of this behavior with their families (Hull, 2002). Although cohabitation is against the law in Indonesia (Pasandaran & Bastian, 2013), it exists at higher rates than generally acknowledged (Jones & Yeung, 2014; Situmorang, 2007). Cohabitation is seen to be a favorable alternative for many couples as they reported that cohabitation provides both emotional and sexual fulfillment (Jones, Yanxia, & Zhi, 2012). A primary reason females may give for choosing to delay or not to marry is fear and reluctance to accept the traditional role of wife, for example, bearing children, being responsible for the household tasks, and having their career interrupted (Jones, 2010; A. J. Utomo, 2014). When alternatives to marriage are available without the traditional responsibilities, then there is less motivation among singles to marry as soon as possible.

*The use of the Internet.* The use of the Internet in Indonesia has grown exponentially, with the numbers of users increasing tenfold between 2004 and 2015 (World Bank, 2016). Greater use of the Internet brings significant impacts to both promote and reduce marriage likelihood. The Internet provides greater ability for communication, which widens the

opportunities to meet potential partners and find individuals based on their preference (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). One study found that married couples who find their partner through the Internet reported higher marital satisfaction than those who found their partner through face-to-face interaction (Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Gonzaga, Ogburn, & VanderWeele, 2013). On the contrary, the Internet may reduce one's willingness to marry. This is because of the addictive nature of social media and dating sites as well as greater uses of pornography, which tends to lead to social isolation and reduce the likelihood of partnering (Malcolm & Naufal, 2014). Klinenberg (2012) also argues that the Internet may promote a single lifestyle as it facilitates social connections with friends and other relatives, which is essential for singles to live a happy life.

*The remaining belief in the universality of marriage.* Despite economic and sociocultural changes that shape single lifestyles among adults as explained above, Indonesian society continues to uphold the universality of marriage (Situmorang, 2007). Although some people, especially the younger generation, may see marriage as a personal choice, marriage remains a cultural demand, and failure to marry is often associated with being regarded as socially incompetent (Himawan et al., 2018a). It is because in the traditional marriage system, only those with serious physical or mental disabilities remained single throughout life (Jones, 2010).

### *The Nature of the Stigma Toward Singles*

Singlism is the word chosen to describe how single is often negatively stigmatized (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). When people describe singles, they tend to think singles as more lonely (Cargan, 1986), however, it has been found that singles are less likely to be depressed. Singles are also described as being immature, self-centered, insecure, and unattractive (DePaulo & Morris, 2006; Morris & DePaulo, 2009). The few positive attributes associated with being single are being independent and career oriented. Married people, in contrast, are more apt to be regarded as kind, caring, loving, and happy. More extreme stereotypes include labeling singles as homosexual (2016).

Studies focusing on stigma among Indonesian women were conducted with widows and divorcees (Parker, 2016) and single pregnant women (Bennett, 2001). These studies may not be instructive for understanding the stigma toward women who have never married or been involved in out-of-wedlock sexual activities or had children.

Nevertheless, single women in Indonesia experience a high degree of stigmatization, to the extent that it causes feeling of inadequacy, poor self-esteem, and inadequate feelings of self-competency. "*Perawan tua*" (Indonesian word for *spinster*) and "*lajang kota*" (Indonesian word for *city single*) are common labels attached to Indonesian single women (Himawan et al., 2018a; Situmorang, 2007). They are socially defined as being too selective or self-oriented.

### *Singles and Gender*

Most existing studies have not adequately addressed the gender difference, and even have excluded male participants. Based on the evolutionary perspective, Shostak (1987) described how never-married women are more prone of stigmatization. According to this view, as women get older, their social life declines, as well as their physical appearance and perceived fertility. Such a condition, beyond lowering women's confidence level, decreases women's attractiveness in the eyes of men. Never-married men, in contrast, may overcome singlehood obstacles easier because of their possibility of having a child at an older age or due to economic success or high social status. Therefore, when never-married women reached their 30s, they are prone to be judged negatively. Conversely, older men (in their 30s) may be perceived more positively than single women of the same age (McKeown, 2015). They may be seen as responsible, organized, or an ideal type of man because people assume they are consolidating career and wealth in preparation for marriage and family rather than being unsuccessful in finding a partner.

In the Indonesian context, Situmorang (2007) reveals several reasons women remain single, including (a) not having found a soul mate, (b) having a traumatic experience due to a broken romantic relationship, (c) having been involved in a broken long-term romantic experience, and (d) having limited time to find partners because of work demands. Internal factors are largely ignored in this view, although Himawan (2018) argues that willingness to marry is also known to be influenced by a complex set of external social and family factors, and an individual's life experience and perceptions.

### *Being Single and Being Happy*

In Indonesia, being happily single is seen as an oxymoron. Many studies confirmed that married people are found to be happier than never-married ones (Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2010; Myers, 2000; Stutzer & Frey, 2006). These studies have been criticized as having flawed designs and confounded comparison groups, such as all type of singles (voluntary or involuntary singles) being contrasted with married people (DePaulo & Morris, 2011).

A more recent finding in Indonesia, however, demonstrated that singles are happier than married couples (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2015). Unfortunately, this study did not examine the reasons or perceptions for being happily single. Situmorang (2007) concluded many single women without a romantic relationship admitted that they gained satisfaction through various forms of relationships with others such as siblings, family members, or friends. Singles are even found to have more meaningful and closer relationships with their parents and relatives than married counterparts (Morris & DePaulo, 2009). However, this finding is not supported for Indonesian women, who were found not to communicate intensely with their parents, preferring to rely on themselves



(Tan, 2010). This finding may be a result of less family acceptance of their single status.

### **How Being Religious May Help Singles Coping With Social and Psychological Pressures Toward Their Singlehood**

Despite the alternatives for happiness other than marriage, cultural pressure in Indonesia is the greatest barrier to singlehood as a life choice. Many singles find their social network erodes as other people marry, and they must form relationships only with those who are also currently single. The reaction to this kind of social dislocation and the failure to meet expectations have been shown to promote depression for singles. There are also data that suggest being single increases the risk of developing heart disease (Notara et al., 2015) and other physical and mental health problems (Horn, Xu, Beam, Turkheimer, & Emery, 2013). Although DePaulo (2017) insists that being single does not necessarily make people more prone to both physical and mental health problems, a certain degree of social rejection toward single in Indonesia may bring considerable impact to the well-being of Indonesian singles.

There are two reasons that religiosity may play a vital role in the life of singles in Indonesia. First, religion is an important identity among the people (Hull, 2016). Therefore, those who are regarded as being religious tend to be more positively perceived in the society. Such a perception may persuade singles to articulate themselves with religious attributes to be less stigmatized. Second, from a psychological perspective, it is worth noting. Kirkpatrick's (1992) idea highlighting how turning to a Higher Being may satisfy a human need for security and belongingness. A similar mechanism of attachment also occurs in adulthood, taking form both in the attachment with others and with a Higher Being. Therefore, when one feels insecure as a victim of social stigma, religiosity may be an effective resource for coping.

The weight of evidence has shown the effective role of religiosity among singles. Granqvist and Hagekull's (2009) study, for instance, found that singles tend to have higher religiosity level than married adults, in such a way that singles are more likely to be involved in religious activity and to experience spiritual change. Nevertheless, this study did not specify types of singles, which prevents us from making more relevant comparisons.

### **Defining Religiosity in the Indonesian Context**

Whereas some scholars define religiosity and spirituality as two distinct variables (Lopez et al., 2005), it is undoubted that those variables share some commonalities for which the definitions may be overlapped to one another (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). In this context, however, religiosity is generally referred to both social practices and personal interpretations related to the religion individual believes.

Indonesia is known as one of the largest Moslem countries, and religion is regarded as the essential attribute among the people (Hull, 2016). The constitution reinforces religiosity as a primary foundation of society, reflected in the first premise of *Pancasila*, the ideological foundation of the Indonesian state, "*Ke-Tuhanan yang Maha Esa* [Belief in Almighty God]." The existence of magical, cultural, and religious-based thinking is pervasive in many classes of Indonesian society (Himawan, 2012, 2013). Religious affiliation is also taken as a fundamental view and is often used to achieve certain politic purposes (McBeth, 2016). With religion being an important identity, society is conditioned to associate people more positively when they articulate religious attributions. Whereas this may be promising for singles, the perception of marriage as a God's demand may become another threat when singles are to adopt religious attributes as their coping styles.

### **Religiosity and Attachment**

Although emphasizing the concept of the infant–mother relationship, Bowlby (1982) argues that the need for attachment remains in one's lifetime. Particularly, in the context of the continuity of attachment from the infant–mother relationship to other relationships later in life, many studies have successfully proven the degree of continuity from the childhood attachment to romantic relationships in adults (Schachner, Shaver, & Gillath, 2008). This is in line with what Baumeister and Leary (1995) assert, that driven by the biggest fear of being lonely, humans express a fundamental need to attach to others. Kirkpatrick (1992) took a step further by demonstrating how religiosity can satisfy the human need for attachment and that when people are not available, then religiosity may serve a similar function. For example, a single person may attach to the idea of God as a representation of an ideal attachment figure. This is because fear and the need for security and comfort are key conditions that most religions try to address. The idea of religion serving as a source of attachment may explain why many people strongly motivated by faith remain single and devote themselves to God as seen in the act of celibacy.

### **The Adaptive Functions of Religiosity Among Singles**

Considering the idea that the human need to attach may be fulfilled through making a meaningful relation with God, it is apparent that when singles successfully build a meaningful connection with a Higher Being, their need to attach is partially fulfilled. Moreover, singles, being advantaged by the spiritual connection they make, can also gain support and acceptance from their religious community. The fact that more singles, compared with married couples, are involved

in religious activities (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2009) is supporting evidence for the aforementioned argument.

Compared with only relying on social relationships, religiosity may look as a more promising way of coping because a religious community often facilitates more trust, acceptance, and emotional support than a nonreligious one. Dingemans and Ingen (2015) showed that frequency of religious attendance is positively correlated with the degree of social trust. This suggests that the relationships developed in religious groups may provide an environment of trust, security, and support. Shared identity from a religion is also known to facilitate the sense of coherence that will increase the likeliness of acceptance among members of the same religion (Mana, Sagy, & Srour, 2016). Hence, when singles have identified themselves with a certain religious group and they actively engage in that group's activities, it is likely that they will be more accepted and emotionally supported, and hence better able to overcome their challenges.

Another reason is the possibility for singles to have non-judgmental disclosure that is facilitated through spiritual connection with a Higher Being. When singles perceive God as source of haven and comfort, they will experience an emotion of awe, realizing that their reality does not stand by itself but that there is other higher meaning in all reality they experience (Saroglou, 2011), and this can in turn elicit a sense of hope. Their spiritual experience enables a reflection on life in the spiritual perspective as well as a sense of developing faith in the belief that there is a good, spiritual reason in the moment of negative events they currently overcome (Pargament & Mahoney, 2002).

Furthermore, when singles experience positive ways of religious coping, they can draw meaning of their singlehood as something that helps develop their spirituality (Himawan et al., 2018b). Consequently, not only are they able to fulfill their need to belong, they can also enjoy more positive emotions and show more congruence in behavior when interacting with others, as well as finding an explanation for their state of singlehood. As some singles may define their singlehood as unwanted, many studies of religiosity demonstrate that it can be comforting for those experiencing a variety of unwanted circumstances, such as grief (Lee, Roberts, & Gibbons, 2013), dealing with cancer (Zwingmann, Wirtz, Müller, Köber, & Murken, 2006), or suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Gerber, Boals, & Schuettler, 2011). Religious coping is also empirically proven to be effective in comforting the self against stigma (Hickman, Glass, Arnkoff, & Fallot, 2013; Szymanski & Obiri, 2011).

A descriptive study of never married women in Jakarta (Tan, 2010) may shed light on the role of religiosity among singles. When asked about how single women overcome their daily problems, they preferred to rely on themselves rather than to share their problems with family members or friends. They indicate that they are used to praying to God when facing problems. Interestingly, instead of talking to ordinary friends, they prefer to share with a missionary

friend. That suggests a feeling of security when sharing with friends who have similar religious views when compared with the general community.

Based on the above arguments, we can summarize that religion is likely to be an adaptive coping mechanism for singles when they are (a) adopting an intrinsic religious orientation (as according to the religious orientation concept of Allport, 1966), (b) having a low level of negative religious coping (as according to Pargament, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011), and (c) able to attach to God as well as to make use of the religious community they have to fulfill their need to belong (Saroglou, 2011).

### *The Maladaptive Functions of Religiosity Among Singles*

The role of religiosity in assisting singles however could also be maladaptive. Singles who are adopting extrinsic religiosity (using religion as a means to an end, as a defense strategy to avoid the real problems) and negative religious coping (seeing God as a punishing figure; pitying themselves for being abandoned by God) may be more burdened through practicing religiosity. They may involve in the denial of the reality (Pargament & Park, 1995), where they shift their focus from their single status to their religious attributes. In this sense, they may appear to be happy with their religious community when at the same time they feel empty because they cannot find a meaningful experience in their involuntary singlehood. They may only focus on making broad relationships with others (especially with similar religious group) or attaching themselves to religious attributes as a shield against societal judgment, but ignore the role of religiosity to gain meaning in life.

The contents of religious doctrines may also be another potential threat for singles. Being as one of the largest Moslem countries, many Indonesian people interpret marriage as one of God's demands (Himawan, 2018), which implies the perception of marriage as being a religious obligation (Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009). Such a perception may cause singles to feel burdened and intimidated when they are in their religious communities, particularly, when their single status is involuntarily held.

### **Conclusion**

Religion and marital status are apparently two important identities among Indonesians. With negative attributes being associated to single status, never-married adults in Indonesia are at risk of social undervaluation which may negatively affect their identity and create psychological distress. Therefore, adopting an effective coping strategy such as religiosity may be beneficial, particularly, as Indonesian culture favors those who demonstrate religiosity. There is a risk that religiosity as a coping mechanism may have some negative consequences when singles attach themselves to religious

rituals and symbols, without having genuine understanding and commitment to the religion. In these cases, religiosity may be predominantly used as a means to avoid negative social stereotyping, and singles may be preoccupied with demonstrating religious attributes instead of developing constructive social supports and a meaningful spiritual experience with their belief system. On the positive side, religiosity provides some benefit as it is a socially acceptable way for singles to fulfill their attachment needs.

This study limits its discussion to the particular roles of religiosity. Certainly, there may be other coping ways that Indonesian singles may be opted to adopt to manage their social difficulties, which deserve a scholarly attention for future studies.

## Recommendation

There is a paucity of studies that examine the experience of singles in Indonesia, and there is a need for further research in this area. This is important due to the growing number of people who delay marriage or chose to be single, whose progressive situation puts them at odds with the more conservative social and cultural norms that are slow to change in Indonesia. Reducing stigma for this group is a priority.

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