



## Empowered Voices: Unmarried Women's Perspective On 'Perawan Tua'

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**Abstract.** The deep-rooted patriarchal culture in Indonesia makes women seen as submissive and inferior to men, so they often receive unfair treatment in the society. Along with the increasing awareness of gender equality, women are starting to dare to choose the path of life they want, including in terms of marital status. The phenomenon of postponing marriage is increasingly widespread because of the awareness of what women will face when getting married in an environment with a patriarchal culture that is still inherent in the society. This can be seen through the increase in the number of unmarried women and the shift in the average age of marriage for women in Indonesia. Ironically, the result of patriarchal culture is still very much embedded in society, making unmarried women obtain a negative stigma from society, which is "perawan tua" as one of them. The purpose of this research is to find out how women who have never been married interpret the term "perawan tua" by society. This research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods analyzed through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) techniques. Interview techniques were used in collecting data for this study and analyzed using the data analysis technique by Smith et al. (2009). The results showed that unmarried women interpreted the term "perawan tua" as negative. However, participants did not internalize the term into themselves.

**Keywords:** marriage, singleness, stigma, perawan tua, unmarried women, patriarchy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal culture is profoundly embedded in several Indonesian populations. Many people still believe that women are not equal to men, which causes them to be discriminated against and marginalized in society, including at work, in politics, and in social settings. Stereotypes of women as weak, irrational, and sensitive beings are not uncommon, and can lead to women being undervalued. The persistence of patriarchal culture hurts women both individually and as a community. The Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, I Gusti Ayu Bintang Darmawati, said that the patriarchal culture that prioritizes men over women has an impact on the quality of women in Indonesia, as seen by the 2019 Human Development Index (HDI) for women, which was 69.18, 6.78 points lower than men (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia 2021).

In reaction to the established patriarchal culture, numerous policies and actions have been implemented to fight against gender inequalities. One of these is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) specifically goal number five, which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in order to achieve a better future for all (United Nations 2023). Furthermore, some movements advocating for gender equality have formed, one of them is the feminist movement. Feminism is a movement that seeks to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression directed at both men and women (Hooks 2016). Based on this description, it can be argued that the feminism movement provides the possibility to sense and receive equal rights, no matter what gender.

As public knowledge of patriarchal society and gender equality grows and deepens, women have the confidence to pursue their desired life path. The government's gender equality campaign has increased women's participation in school and the workplace. This has had a significant impact on female empowerment in Indonesia. Traditional patriarchal beliefs are gradually giving way to new ideals that promote gender equality (Himawan 2020).

Gender equality, which has recently gained public attention, encourages underprivileged women to live the life they desire and make significant choices for themselves, one of which is the decision to get married. This can be seen by the increase of the phenomenon of delayed marriage, often known as "waithood" which is primarily experienced by women. The phenomenon of "waithood" emerges as a result of patriarchal culture, which places women lower than males and treats them unfairly in society, prompting women to reconsider their decision to enter the commitment of marriage. Furthermore, the problem of "waithood" arises from the promotion of patriarchal norms that always make women as the "victims" (Musahwi 2023).

In Indonesia, there are changes in women's marital preferences. This is demonstrated by data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which shows a 13.1% growth in the percentage of unmarried women over the course of a decade, reaching 40.43% in 2012 (Badan Pusat Statistik 2013) and 53.53% in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik 2022). In line with this data, Hasto Wardoyo, Head of the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), stated that the average marriage age for women is decreasing. In contrast to 2022, when the average age of marriage for women is 22, the average age of marriage for women five years before was 20 (Nurizal 2022).

Ironically, many people still see women's decision to remain single when they are mature enough to marry as a negative thing. Women are expected to marry immediately in order to ease family burdens, carry out religious orders, and avoid immorality (Astari 2021). Women are frequently pressured to marry and have children in order to be considered a complete women (Intan & Machdalena 2021). This patriarchal viewpoint labels women who remain single at a mature age for marriage as unmarketable and overly picky about their partners. Regardless of their accomplishments, women will be regarded failures if they do not marry by a particular age. These women face a variety of unfavorable stereotypes, including "undesireable (*tidak laku*)," "withered (*layu*)," "too picky," and the most common in society, "old maid" (Intan & Machdalena 2021).

The term "perawan tua" originates from the word spinster, which was used for women who worked with wool. However, the term has evolved to refer to an elderly woman who is no longer appealing

since she is not married yet (Blakemore 2015; Rosenthal 2002). In Indonesia, the ideal age for a woman to marry is between 25 and 30 years old, taking into account the productive period of women's reproductive function as well as the psychological state of women who are more mature at that age; if a woman exceeds the ideal age, she is labeled as a "perawan tua" (Atri 2017).

As technology and the internet advanced, one of its products, social media, began to emerge as a platform for people to express themselves. Although the impact of social media is still being assessed, it is undeniable that it has been used to express and establish a community around something invisible (Flores, Gómez, Roa & Whitson 2020). One of these avenues of expression is the digital feminism movement. Feminists see the internet as a platform that can elevate and create space for women to debate and speak their difficulties (Willem & Tortajada 2021). Furthermore, social media is a revolutionary instrument for feminist activities that strengthens and expands women's voices in order to initiate both local and worldwide actions (Flores *et al.* 2020).

In response to the occurrence of "perawan tua" stigma on unmarried women, social media accounts focusing on feminism and gender equality movements have begun to speak out against the stigmas encountered by unmarried women in an effort to dispute the label. Indonesia Feminis (@indonesiafeminis) is an Instagram account that promotes gender equality and feminism. Indonesia Feminis' posted content is primarily educational. Currently, Indonesia Feminis is frequently seen collaborating with accounts with similar principles, such as Konde.co (@konde.co) and Kabar Sejuk (@kabarsejuk).



Figure 1. Instagram upload by Indonesia Feminist with Kabar Sejuk  
Source: (Instagram @kabarsejuk, 2023)

The collaborative post from the @kabarsejuk and @indonesiafeminis accounts demonstrates their attempts to educate audience about the stigma associated with unmarried women who are not yet married at a suitable age for marriage. Research findings that support the post's points are also offered. Based on this research background, the purpose of this study is to determine the meaning of the term "perawan tua" among unmarried women feminist social media followers, and research questions can be phrased as "How do unmarried women feminist social media followers interpret the term 'perawan tua'?"

In this research, a literature review is required to help the author establish the stigma of "old maid" as an observed phenomenon. The goal of this literature review is to compare past research, fill gaps in existing research, and expand research on stigma and feminism. There are nine international journals and one national journal that are used as references by researchers in previous studies.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research implements a constructivist research paradigm. This paradigm believes that people comprehend the meaning of everything by developing subjective meanings according to their experiences, which can guide and help researchers in finding complicated viewpoints (Creswell & Creswell 2023). This paradigm is implemented in this study because its purpose is to investigate and comprehend the meaning of unmarried women at the ideal age of marriage in regard to the term

"perawan tua," which has become a societal stigma against unmarried adult women, by studying the background and experiences that influence participants in constructing meaning and interpreting the term "perawan tua." This study seeks to get a complex picture of the meaning of the term "perawan tua" among unmarried women through the use of a qualitative-exploratory research design.

In-depth interviews with research participants who met the following requirements were conducted in April 2024 via an online teleconference platform:

1. Age 30 years or older;
2. Never have been married;
3. A follower of feminist movement's social media;
4. Familiar with the term "perawan tua";
5. Have had someone questioning their singleness at least once;
6. Have shared their experience of being single on social media.

This study implements Smith's Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) method. This method usually involves a small number of participants with the purpose of revealing something from each individual's life experience. The Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis method focuses on exploring comprehensively a person's experience of something and how they interpret it. Furthermore, the Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis method employs an idiographic approach in which every individual's experience is unique, allowing researchers to examine how each participant interprets their own experiences differently (Smith *et al.* 2009). From the research subject criteria, three women were found to be research participants. This table summarizes the data of three participants:

**Table 1.** Summary of the informants' data

Name	Age	Marital Status	Domicile
Participant 1	35 years old	Single	Samarinda
Participant 2	31 years old	Single	Jakarta
Participant 3	42 years old	Single	Alabama

Source: *Research*, 2024

In addition to in-depth interviews, this study employs secondary data in the form of books, journals, and other sources that can help further understand the research findings.

## RESULT

The first participant is a woman from Samarinda. She is still single because she believes she has not found the right person, and she received both positive and negative feedback about her single status from her surroundings. Being single in her 30s and living alone with her father gives Participant 1 more independence in her daily life. She stated calmly that she had no difficulty with her single status at her age. Participant 1 and her family regard it as a sacred endeavor that can only be attempted once in a lifetime, and while Participant 1 is still open to the possibility of getting married in the future, it is not her top priority right now.

*"Thankfully, in my family, there hasn't been much pressure. It's more common in the workplace, where the environment sometimes pushes with remarks like, 'Why aren't you married yet? Come on!'"—often in a forceful way, without understanding the background or reasons behind the delay. They don't know the circumstances, yet they say things like, 'Just marry this person—you're too picky.' When in fact, marriage does require careful consideration."* – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)

*"I only have my father now, so it's just the two of us at home. I've gotten used to doing everything independently. So being on my own feels okay—it's fine, there's nothing wrong with it."* – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)

*"In my family, marriage is considered something sacred—something that, if possible, should only happen once in a lifetime." – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)*

*"I'm actually not closing off the possibility, like I said before, but it's just not a priority. I still want to focus on self-development, still want to travel here and there. So, it's like—yeah, it's okay. I've never blamed myself for not being married." – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)*

Although she has never been labeled a "perawan tua" directly, Participant 1 is frequently confronted with phrases such as undesirable (*tidak laku*), too picky, and terms with similar meanings to these terms. Regarding the term "perawan tua," Participant 1 says it is the outcome of old-fashioned thinking that identifies unmarried older women. She believes that the term is obsolete today because there is no age limit for marriage for everyone and it is unacceptable to use.

*"Undesirable (tidak laku), too picky, that's why you're still single—that kind of thing. I've never been called a 'perawan tua' or anything, but the 'undesirable' part, yeah. It's like they're comparing us to an item or something, like we're supposed to be sold and taken." – (Participant 1, interview, 5 April 2024)*

*"This term has been around for a long time. It's used for women who are older but still unmarried. Honestly, it's confusing. They're the ones still using it, but I think in today's world, we really don't need it anymore. There's no set age for getting married. Even in the holy scriptures, there's no rule that says you have to marry by a certain age." – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)*

Living in an age of advanced technology, Participant 1 enjoys sharing her experiences and sentiments about singleness, as well as terminology that discredit it, on social media. She does this because she believes she has friends who face the same condition as her. She felt relieved and glad after releasing the emotions she had been keeping.

*"It ended up becoming a moment to share and open up with each other. Some friends were going through the same thing, and some had even been married and then divorced. And in their case, the struggle is sometimes even bigger than mine, who's never been married at all." – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)*

*"First, it feels like relief. There are usually these pent-up feelings, things we can't express, so getting it out feels good. That's the main thing. Then, when a friend comments and supports you, it's like... you feel happy, like you're not alone, and there's someone who's got your back." – (Participant 1, interview, March 15 2024)*

Participant 2 is a 31-year-old woman living in Jakarta. She believes that being unmarried is not an issue because she is already satisfied with herself and does not need marriage for anything to complete her. Coming from a divorced family, Participant 2 experiences the projection of her mother's marriage-related stress onto her, which is highly relevant to her current self and choices.

*"For me, I feel complete with myself. So, I don't see marriage as something that would complete me." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

*"So, what drives me now is actually because of my mom's values, because of her experiences or traumas." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

Participant 2 notices a difference in society's response to men and women who are still single at the ideal marriage age. The social construction is unfair to women since males are excused for not marrying because society believes that male partners should be older than women.

*"It really comes from that social construct I mentioned earlier, which isn't fair. It's definitely unfair to women. So, when men take longer to get married or whatever, it's understood. If they fail, it's okay, because 'Well, men don't need to get married right away.' Our society's norm is that men are ideally supposed to be older than women." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

With her history and experiences, Participant 2 views marriage as a partnership in which she and her partner work as equals with similar personal values. As the individual with the highest level of education on both sides of the family, Participant 2's viewpoint is likely heard by her family. However, this does not necessarily liberate her from the criticism of those around her about her single status.

*"To me, marriage is a partnership. We're a team, equals—there's no one with a higher or lower status. And in that partnership, there are shared values, which is why I can choose a partner as part of that team." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

She states that the phrase "perawan tua" is a type of stigma against unmarried women, as well as an objectification of women. Although she was never directly labeled as a "perawan tua" by those around her, Participant 2 got statements oriented toward an explanation that led to women who had an expiry date and needed to marry right away.

*"Perawan tua' is a stigma, a form of stigma. And stigma itself is a form of injustice against women. It's how negative values are attached to women to push them into getting married quickly." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

*"So basically, women are seen as passive, and up until now, they've still been treated as objects, not really able to be seen as subjects." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

*"But with explanations like, 'As you get older, it's going to be like this or that,' they're basically talking about expiration. And to me, that's directly related to the 'perawan tua' idea—it's kind of the same." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

In the context of sharing experiences on social media as a kind of self-expression, Participant 2 views social media postings as a sort of self-image constructed in the audience's eyes. She sees her freedom of expression on social media as a method of validating the experiences of victims who are going through the same thing as her, giving them hope that they are no longer alone.

*"At least I can reach out to my friends or anyone who sees my post, to validate their feelings." – (Participant 2, interview, March 17 2024)*

Participant 3 is a 42-year-old Indonesian who is currently pursuing her PhD in Alabama. She punished herself for not being able to give her father grandchildren before his passing in 2017, as she had never married. Despite her strong appearance in front of her parents, Participant 3 felt devastated by the distorted comments that people around her said regarding her singleness. Over time, she came to terms with the situation and discovered wisdom in the struggles she faced. She believed that there were many chances available to her as a single woman that she would not be able to pursue if she were married.

*"But maybe what they don't know is that I told my friends, 'I made my mom unhappy.'" – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

*"When my dad passed away, I thought like that—I blamed myself for not being married yet. My dad never had the chance to have grandchildren, and maybe people also thought his happiness was less because he didn't get to hold his grandkids." – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

*"Now, I have the opportunity for a scholarship, to pursue a PhD at this age, which for me, maybe—maybe my capacity is like, 'Oh, I can handle it more easily because of their single status.'" – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

Participant 3 learned to accept herself as an unmarried woman through the wisdom she received and the lovely experiences of her friends who married in their forties and beyond. She believed it was okay to wait for the right spouse for her. She still wants to marry someday, and she sees marriage as a companionship that will last the rest of her life. Nonetheless, she does not regard marriage as her first priority now.

*"That's what helps me accept myself, you know—it's okay to wait. Because the reality is, my friends who waited aren't waiting because they're unattractive, like people sometimes say about me." – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

*"Companionship in a marriage is about being together. Maybe at first, it's about things like physical attraction and all that, but in the end, you're going to live together forever as friends, right? So, it's a companion who stays with you." – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

Regarding the stigma of "perawan tua," which is applied to women who are still single, Participant 3 argues that the term portrays women as a commodity whose worth falls as they age. She also argues that the term "perawan tua" is commonly utilized in popular media. As a result, the phrase is now associated with unmarried women. Despite its widespread use, Participant 3 regards the term "perawan tua" as an aggressive slur that devalues women and appears to humiliate those who have never married.

*"It's like when they call you a 'perawan tua', there's that added label of being undesirable (tidak laku). So, there's a value attached to it, right? And when you get older, your value is seen as less, like your worth just drops." – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

*"I think the term 'perawan tua' is harsh. I mean, 'virgin (perawan)' refers to someone who hasn't had sex, right? It's like, 'Ew, why are you still okay with being someone who hasn't had sex?'" – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

Participant 3 is an active social media user who frequently advocates for women's rights and the prevention of sexual violence. She feels that expressing herself on social media would lead to unimaginable opportunities. She occasionally expresses her views on single women, but she does not want them to take the lead over her social media activities. She creates stuff on her singleness as a sort of self-assurance.

*"Because of those posts, sometimes I get invited to things like this. You never know, right? Those little opportunities. Like, for example, I get invited to webinars about toxic relationships because they've seen my posts about how to recognize a toxic relationship." – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

*"I'm expressing that not to vent or anything, but more for self-assurance. Like, I'll be alright, you know?" – (Participant 3, interview, March 31 2024)*

## DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it can be inferred that the three research participants own, narrate, and reveal their interpretations of the term "perawan tua" and its association with single women in Indonesia. Each participant described personal events and individuals in her life who are important to her as a single woman in Indonesia, as well as the term "perawan tua" and related terms. Each participant's diverse cultural backgrounds, domiciles, and social conditions influenced how they viewed the term "spinster" and its associated concepts.

Four major themes were identified from the results of this research: 1) Unmarried Women's Interpretation of the Term "Perawan Tua"; 2) The Meaning of Singleness as a Women; 3) The Meaning of Marriage as a Single Woman; 4) The Use of Social Media as a Place for Expressing Things. The table below summarizes the master table, which displays the combined themes of all participants. This table integrates the researcher's interpretations of each meaning of the term "perawan tua" as provided by the three participants.

**Table 2.** Summary of the master table structure

Theme Levels	Theme Hierarchy	Themes
Master Theme	1	Unmarried Women's Interpretation of the Term "Perawan Tua"
Sub-category	1.1	A term for an unmarried woman
	1.2	The objectification of women
	1.3	An inappropriate negative term.
	1.4	An inappropriate negative term.
Master Theme	2	The Meaning of Singleness as a Women
Sub-category	2.1	Being stigmatized by the society
	2.2	Coping with Singleness
	2.3	Feeling enough of yourself
	2.4	Not an issue
	2.5	Different views on unmarried men and women
	2.6	The role of loved ones in dealing with singleness
Master Theme	3	The Meaning of Marriage as a Single Woman
Sub-category	3.1	Opens up the possibility of getting married
	3.2	Coping with Singleness
	3.3	Feeling enough of yourself
Master Theme	4	The Use of Social Media as a Place for Expressing Things
Sub-category	4.1	As a self-image
	4.2	A place to share
	4.3	Support one another

Source: *Research*, 2024

### Unmarried Women's Interpretation of the Term "Perawan Tua"

As women who are more than thirty years old that are still single and have never married, every one of them viewed the term "spinster" as a term that has a negative connotation that is inadequate to be addressed to single women. Participant 1 and participant 3 made it clear that the term "spinster" is used by society specifically to label women in old age who are not married. Although women's empowerment movements have been vocal and persistent in advocating for the rights that women deserve, patriarchal society remains prevalent in the household, cultural, economic, and political fields (Sakina & Asiah 2017). According to Sandi and Kolip in (Wandi 2015), one of the consequences of patriarchy is the negative categorization of women. The three individuals recognize the term "perawan tua" as adverse.

Furthermore, participant two believed that the term "perawan tua" proved that some Indonesians still consider women as objects and are unable to fulfill their roles as subjects. Meanwhile, participant

3 indicated that the phrase "perawan tua" refers to the group of women who are not marketable. This appears to make women a commodity whose worth will decrease as they age. Swararahima (2023) indicated that the perspective and use of the term "perawan tua" on single women stemmed from society's incorrect perception of women as objects and commodities. Meanwhile, women and men should be treated equally as subjects. Furthermore, the term "perawan tua" itself offers a sense that women's bodies are objects that can become expired as they age (Hardi 2018).

### **The Meaning of Singleness as a Women**

Although the three participants were never openly labeled as "perawan tua" by those around them, they were stigmatized for their single status in various circumstances. Participant 1 was once described as "unmarketable" by her office colleagues. Participant 2 was previously told that no man would want to be with her since she was a graduate who was considered very smart. Participant 3 was once said that the reason she has not had a husband until now is related to her obese physique, which makes no man want to be in a relationship with her.

The participants' expressions above are consistent with Walby's (1991) description of six interconnected structures that are capable of causing causality: patriarchy's relationship with domestic households, paid work, the state, violence and harassment against women, sexuality, and culture. Furthermore, the relationship between patriarchy and culture is explained, with the structure creating an image of women through a series of institutions.

Patriarchy's link with the household and culture undoubtedly promotes the establishment of stigma and negative labels for women in the marriage sphere. Indonesia's patriarchal culture stigmatizes unmarried women in the eyes of society (Septiani & Syafiq 2013). Some common unfavorable stereotypes about unmarried women in Western and Eastern countries include 'creepy old hag' and 'undesireable (*tidak laku*)' (Nanik, Tairas & Hendriani 2018).

One of the participants pointed out that she copes with her singleness by exchanging thoughts with her friends on the challenges and difficulties of being a single woman who has passed the marriageable age. Manalo, Ng, Yu & Ilac (2022) discovered that in southern nations, where people are more social, unmarried women are closer to their friends to satisfy their need for intimacy, which is thought to persist longer than romantic relationships with males. Now, the three participants have reached the point where they embrace themselves and feel adequate as single women. All three participants found no problem with their current state of singleness. Zhang's (2020) research also discovered that single women in China, who have never married, are pleased with their single status and transform their negative identity construction based on societal expectations into a positive identity construction.

Although they are content with their single status, the three individuals see variations in societal attitudes toward unmarried men and women. Their expression is consistent with what Intan & Machdalena (2021) suggested, specifically that women and the institution of marriage are inseparable. Women who are still single at a suitable age for marriage face a negative stereotype, regardless of their outstanding achievements. Furthermore, adult women have a significantly higher urge for marriage than adult men. Therefore, adult men may choose to postpone marriage in order to prepare for their future families. This contrasts sharply with women's urge to marry and have children that stems from societal pressure (Septiani & Syafiq 2013).

All three participants had a pleasant and supportive atmosphere to help them navigate their lives as single women. Participant 1 comes from a family that embraces single women, while Participant 3 has close friends who share her status, so she feels at comfort. This is consistent with the findings of Band-Winterstein & Manchik-Rimon (2014) study, which found that having friends and relatives who support a single person can help them overcome feelings of loneliness. Furthermore, research findings of Simpson (2016) indicate that friendship is a vital basis for both mental and physical support for single women.

### **The Meaning of Marriage as a Single Woman**

Regarding the potential of getting married in the future, all three participants remain open to the idea of entering the institution of marriage. However, none of the three felt compelled to marry immediately. The findings of this study are consistent with Silverio & Soulsby's (2020) research participants, who are incredibly critical of married and single status and agree that marriage is not an absolute ideal, but rather a gradient element of certain people's lives. Furthermore, Simpson (2016) verifies the notion that a single woman will enter a relationship if given the opportunity or finds the suitable person.

Having not been married in almost 30 years, the three participants saw marriage as an obligation and a priority. The results of this study are consistent with the findings from Nanik et al. (2018), who discovered that at some point in life, women have distinct priorities and that singleness and marriage are dynamic concepts that cannot be generalized. Furthermore, Apostolou (2017) discovered that the older and more experienced a person is, the more excuses they will find to remain single. Marriage was also viewed by the participants as something that lasts a lifetime and involves an equal partner. As defined by Ajeng (2022), an equal partner is one who understands the requirements of the other and can communicate and listen to their perspectives.

### **The Use of Social Media as a Place for Expressing Things**

All three members are active social media users who regularly post on various platforms. For participant 2, social media is a sort of self-image that allows people to see how a person wants to be assessed, what values they hold, and how they define themselves. Participant two's expression lines up with Sari & Ajeng's (2017) view of social media, which can affect a person's self-image through photographs and captions that they publish. Furthermore, social media enables for interactions among users in response to published messages. These interactions on social media also shape a person's self-image, either positive or negative (Sari & Ajeng 2017).

All three participants saw social media as a platform where stigmatized victims may encourage one another after being questioned regarding their singleness. Two participants also saw social media as a platform to share and support one another. This is consistent with Rosyidah and Nurwati (2019), who described social media as a tool for sharing, publishing work, and building networks. The utilization of social media is thought to be extremely suited for communicating new feelings and sparking discussions regarding feminist ideas (Flores et al., 2020). Furthermore, experts and activists agree that the emergence of social media has resulted in a new spirit inside the feminism movement. This enables women to freely express their preferences or dislikes for something by sharing stories about their personal experiences and/or opinions (Megarry, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussion of this research, a conclusion is reached to address the research question about if unmarried women feminist social media followers interpret the phrase "perawan tua" as a negative term associated with unmarried women. The term "perawan tua" demonstrates that women are still considered objects and cannot be satisfied as subjects. Furthermore, the name "perawan tua" reinforces the perception of women as commodities whose worth declines with age. Despite understanding the term "old maid" negatively, the participants viewed their single status positively. This can be seen by participants who feel content with themselves and do not perceive singleness as a serious issue. This positive meaning exists because of the supportive environment, which helps in the formation of perspectives and the internalization of singleness. Furthermore, participants' attitudes are formed and internalized based on their personal and environmental experiences with singleness and marriage.

This research has certain limitations, particularly the lack of references in national academic journals that specifically address the stigma associated with the term "perawan tua" toward unmarried women. Most existing national literature either explores this stigma through analyses of creative

representations or discusses it in the context of its influence in promoting early marriage. Future research could adopt a more comprehensive approach by examining a broader range of stigmatizing terms related to singleness, as multiple such terms are currently in circulation within society. Additionally, future studies could include both male and female participants to better understand societal attitudes and potential disparities regarding single men and women.

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