



Intimate Wedding: The Transition of Gen Z Urban Marriage from Collective Celebration to Personal Space

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A B S T R A C T

The rapid expansion of digital culture, shifting social values, and increasing economic considerations have reshaped how Generation Z perceives marriage, contributing to the growing preference for intimate weddings. This study aims to examine the factors influencing this preference, explore the psychological and cultural negotiation processes underlying the decision-making, and analyze the transformation of marriage rituals from the perspective of psychological anthropology. A qualitative case study approach was employed through digital document observation and a literature review. Data were collected from publicly accessible intimate wedding content on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the preference for *intimate weddings* emerges from the interaction of economic rationality, digital cultural influences, the pursuit of authenticity, and negotiations with family expectations, cultural norms, and broader social values. Through the practice of bricolage, Generation Z selectively preserves sacred elements of marriage while reconstructing ritual symbols to reflect contemporary identities and lifestyles. This study introduces the concept of reflexive ritual minimalism as a theoretical contribution, demonstrating that marriage rituals in the digital era are not diminished but symbolically reconfigured into more personal, reflective, and socially legitimate forms, thereby enriching psychological anthropology's understanding of ritual transformation in contemporary society.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage occupies a fundamental position across societies as a social institution that extends beyond the formation of a new family unit. It serves as a cultural mechanism through which social values, collective identities, and intergenerational relationships are maintained and transmitted. From an anthropological perspective, marriage is understood as an integral component of the cultural system, expressed through symbols, normative values, and ritual practices that shape social life. Rather than remaining fixed over time, marriage rituals continuously evolve in response to social transformation, economic conditions, political change, and technological advancement, all of which influence how individuals interpret and negotiate the meaning of marriage. Consequently, marriage rituals should be viewed not merely as instruments for preserving tradition but also as dynamic arenas where inherited cultural values are reinterpreted and reconciled with the changing realities of contemporary society.

In contemporary society, this transformation is increasingly reflected in the growing prominence of individual preferences in shaping the organization and meaning of marriage ceremonies. As personal agency becomes more influential, decisions regarding wedding practices are often guided by the couple's own aspirations rather than by the collective expectations of extended families or local communities. This shift has encouraged the emergence of more flexible, simplified, and personalized forms of wedding celebrations that better accommodate the values, lifestyles, and circumstances of modern couples. Consequently, marriage is no longer understood solely as a public symbol of family prestige and social recognition but also as an expression of personal identity, psychological well being, and lived experience.

These developments suggest that marriage rituals are dynamic cultural practices whose meanings are continuously reconstructed in response to changing social values, cultural orientations, and patterns of contemporary life.

The transformation of marriage practices becomes particularly significant when examined in relation to Generation Z, a cohort that has grown up within an environment shaped by digital technologies and constant online connectivity. Previous studies suggest that this generation places greater emphasis on authenticity, work-life balance, personal autonomy, and psychological well being, all of which substantially influence their life choices and interpersonal relationships. These value orientations also shape how Generation Z interprets marriage, encouraging wedding practices that reflect individual identity, emotional comfort, and meaningful personal experiences rather than adherence to conventional social expectations. From the perspective of psychological anthropology, cultural behaviour is understood as the product of continuous interaction between inherited cultural frameworks and the individual's psychological interpretation of lived experiences. Accordingly, the preference for *intimate weddings* can be interpreted as a process of cultural and psychological negotiation in which young couples seek to reconcile familial and societal expectations with their aspirations for emotional security, autonomy, and authentic self-expression.

This preference is shaped not only by economic considerations but also by a fundamental shift in how marriage itself is understood. Rather than functioning solely as a means of social legitimization, marriage rituals are increasingly perceived as opportunities to create meaningful and emotionally significant experiences for the couple. Such developments indicate that culture is not a fixed entity; instead, it is continuously reproduced

and redefined through the everyday practices and choices of younger generations. Previous scholarship has documented this transformation from various perspectives. [Carter and Duncan \(2017\)](#) argue that contemporary couples strive to design weddings that express individuality and authenticity while simultaneously conforming to prevailing social norms, creating a tension between personal distinctiveness and social acceptance. Similarly, [Pywell and Probert \(2023\)](#) demonstrate that changing socioeconomic conditions, including financial pressures and the COVID-19 pandemic, have encouraged couples to reconsider conventional assumptions about the ideal wedding celebration and to adopt more flexible and meaningful forms of marital rituals.

Further evidence is provided by [Mamali and Stevens \(2020\)](#), who conceptualize wedding ceremonies as a form of display work, whereby couples publicly perform and communicate their relationship to gain recognition and legitimacy within their social networks. Likewise, [Fagbola et al. \(2023\)](#) argue that marriage rituals are shaped by the involvement of key social actors acting as liminal gatekeepers, whose authority influences whether a ceremony is considered culturally and socially legitimate. In addition, [Shamu et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrate that the widespread use of social media has transformed patterns of symbolic consumption surrounding weddings. Within this digital environment, social status is expressed less through the scale of the celebration and more through carefully curated visual aesthetics and online representations, reflecting changing cultural expectations regarding marriage rituals.

Within the Indonesian context, [Saehu et al. \(2024\)](#) report that an increasing number of young adults perceive simplified wedding ceremonies as a practical alternative that aligns with economic efficiency, administrative convenience, and the values of contemporary life. Despite these contributions, existing studies have predominantly examined *intimate weddings* through the lenses of economic rationality, consumer culture, digital media, and lifestyle transformation. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how individual psychological processes interact with cultural change in shaping contemporary marriage practices. This gap highlights the need for a more integrative perspective that bridges cultural and psychological dimensions. Accordingly, the present study adopts a psychological anthropology framework to explain how Generation Z reconstructs the meaning of marriage rituals through the interplay between personal experiences, cultural values, and broader social transformations.

Although previous studies have examined the transformation of contemporary wedding practices from the perspectives of family sociology, consumer culture, and digital media, the phenomenon of *intimate weddings* remains insufficiently explored, particularly regarding the interplay between cultural transformation and individual psychological processes. [Carter and Duncan \(2017\)](#) argue that contemporary couples negotiate their wedding arrangements by balancing the desire for personal distinctiveness with the need to conform to prevailing social expectations. Expanding this perspective, [Pywell and Probert \(2023\)](#) demonstrate that post-pandemic social conditions have encouraged couples to reassess conventional wedding celebrations by prioritizing economic rationality and practical considerations. Similarly, [Fagbola et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize that marriage rituals continue to rely on the approval of culturally authoritative actors, whose recognition determines the social

legitimacy of ceremonial practices. Furthermore, [Shamu et al. \(2024\)](#) reveal that social media has fundamentally reshaped symbolic consumption in weddings, shifting the emphasis from material extravagance toward strategically curated visual aesthetics and digital representation. Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights into the changing nature of marriage rituals; however, they pay limited attention to how psychological experiences and cultural values interact in shaping Generation Z's preference for intimate weddings, leaving an important theoretical gap that this study seeks to address.

Within the Indonesian context, [Saehu et al. \(2024\)](#) found that the growing preference for simplified wedding ceremonies is driven by financial efficiency, administrative practicality, and changing perceptions of marriage among younger generations. Nevertheless, existing scholarship has largely concentrated on structural dimensions, including economic constraints, digital media, and patterns of symbolic consumption. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which cultural transformation intersects with individual psychological processes in shaping the meanings attached to contemporary marriage rituals. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a psychological anthropology perspective that conceptualizes individuals as active cultural agents who continuously construct, negotiate, and reproduce the symbolic meanings of marriage through their lived experiences and interactions with broader sociocultural contexts.

Against this background, the present study identifies a significant research gap in the limited understanding of how Generation Z's preference for *intimate weddings* emerges from the interaction between culturally inherited family values and the psychological orientations that characterize this generation, including authenticity, emotional well-being, efficiency, and personal autonomy. Existing studies have predominantly interpreted the rise of *intimate weddings* as a consequence of structural changes, such as economic pressures, the expansion of the wedding industry, and the growing influence of digital media. While these perspectives provide important insights into the external drivers of changing wedding practices, they pay comparatively little attention to the subjective processes through which individuals negotiate, reinterpret, and reconstruct the cultural meanings of marriage. Consequently, the psychological dimensions of cultural transformation remain underexplored, particularly regarding how young adults actively integrate inherited traditions with contemporary values when redefining marriage rituals.

From the perspective of psychological anthropology, cultural practices are shaped not only by socially shared norms but also by the ways individuals interpret, internalize, and negotiate their lived experiences within specific cultural contexts. Accordingly, the decision to pursue an intimate wedding should not be viewed merely as a practical response to contemporary circumstances but rather as an expression of identity construction that reflects the dynamic interaction between cultural values, emotional experiences, and aspirations for the future. This perspective provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the ongoing transformation of marriage rituals in contemporary urban Indonesia. Beyond contributing to the anthropology of marriage, the present study advances psychological anthropology by examining an area that has received limited scholarly attention, namely the transformation of family rituals through the reciprocal relationship between culture and individual meaning-

making. Ultimately, this research offers a new conceptual lens for explaining how cultural values, psychological processes, and social change converge in reshaping the meaning of marriage among Generation Z.

The principal novelty of this study lies in its integration of psychological anthropology with the rites of passage framework to explain the changing meanings of *intimate weddings* among Generation Z. Previous research has largely interpreted the emergence of *intimate weddings* as a response to economic constraints, shifting lifestyles, and the expanding influence of digital media within the contemporary wedding industry. In contrast, this study conceptualizes *intimate weddings* as a process of psychological cultural negotiation, through which individuals actively select, reinterpret, and reconstruct cultural symbols in ways that reflect their personal identities, emotional well-being, and value orientations. This perspective is grounded in Richard A. Shweder's theoretical framework, which argues that human cognition, emotions, and behaviour are inseparable from the cultural systems within which they develop. Accordingly, culture is understood not merely as an external structure that shapes behaviour but as a dynamic interpretive framework through which individuals assign meaning to everyday experiences and continuously renegotiate the significance of social rituals. By combining these perspectives, the present study offers a new conceptual explanation for how marriage rituals are transformed through the reciprocal interaction between cultural traditions and individual psychological agency in the digital era.

In the present study, the preference for *intimate weddings* is interpreted as a cultural expression emerging from individuals' efforts to construct meaning through their relationships with family, symbolic representations of respect, patterns of consumption, and the formation of personal identity. From this perspective, the transformation of marriage rituals extends beyond modifications in ceremonial practices, reflecting broader shifts in how younger generations reinterpret cultural values through their psychological experiences. This interpretation is further informed by Van Gennep's theory of rites of passage (Van Gennep et al., 2018) and Victor Turner's concept of liminality, which together provide a valuable framework for understanding how the social and symbolic meanings of marriage are continuously renegotiated within contemporary society. Accordingly, this study seeks to broaden the scope of psychological anthropology by offering a more nuanced explanation of the cultural transformation of marriage rituals in present-day Indonesia.

Building upon this perspective, the study addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) What factors encourage Generation Z to prefer *intimate weddings* over conventional wedding ceremonies? (2) How do psychological and cultural processes interact in shaping this preference? (3) In what ways does the practice of *intimate weddings* represent a transformation of marriage rituals from the perspective of psychological anthropology? To answer these questions, the study investigates the determinants underlying Generation Z's changing orientation toward marriage, examines the negotiation between inherited cultural values and individual psychological needs in wedding practices, and interprets *intimate weddings* as a contemporary reconfiguration of the rites of passage. This analytical framework is consistent with Rubenstein (1992), who argues that rites of passage continuously acquire new meanings

as they are reinterpreted within changing social and cultural contexts.

The contributions of this research are expected to be both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it expands scholarship on the anthropology of marriage by incorporating psychological dimensions that have received limited attention in previous studies. More specifically, it introduces psychological-cultural negotiation and reflexive ritual minimalism as conceptual tools for understanding how Generation Z actively reconstructs the symbolic meanings of marriage through the interaction of cultural traditions, personal values, and emotional experiences. Practically, the findings provide insights for scholars, communities, and policymakers into the changing value orientations surrounding marriage among younger generations. Furthermore, this study offers a foundation for future research on the transformation of family rituals in Indonesia, particularly in relation to digitalization, evolving social structures, and the dynamic relationship between culture and psychological processes in contemporary society.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore the transformation of marriage practices among Generation Z, particularly the shift from traditional weddings to intimate weddings. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the objective of the research was not to test causal relationships among variables but to develop an in-depth understanding of the cultural meanings, social values, and psychological experiences underlying this transformation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry seeks to interpret how individuals construct meanings from their lived experiences within specific social and cultural contexts. Likewise, Sugiyono (2022) emphasizes that qualitative research aims to understand social reality holistically by interpreting naturally occurring data rather than relying on statistical measurement. Consistent with these perspectives, the present study focuses on revealing how Generation Z reconstructs the meaning of marriage through changing cultural practices.

The selection of a case study design was based on its capacity to generate a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of contemporary social phenomena by integrating multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2018) argues that case study research is particularly appropriate when investigating complex phenomena embedded in real-life settings where contextual conditions are inseparable from the phenomenon itself. Within this framework, the case examined in this study is the growing adoption of *intimate weddings* among Generation Z in Indonesia as an illustration of the ongoing transformation of marriage rituals. This phenomenon is interpreted as the outcome of the interaction between digital culture, shifting social values, and the psychological orientations of younger generations in redefining the meaning and purpose of marriage. Consequently, the case study approach provides an analytical framework for understanding *intimate weddings* not merely as a changing wedding format but as a broader process of cultural and psychological transformation in contemporary Indonesian society.

Data were collected through a combination of non-participant observation, document analysis, and literature review, allowing the phenomenon to be examined from multiple complementary sources. Non-participant observation focused on

publicly accessible content shared on digital platforms, particularly Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, using hashtags such as #intimateweddingindonesia, #intimatewedding, #nikahgenz, #nikahdikua #weddinggenz, #nikahsederhana, #nikahsederhana and #microwedding. The observation also included posts from wedding organizers, bridal service providers, wedding photographers, and Generation Z couples who documented their wedding experiences between 2023 and 2025. As argued by Kozinets and Gretzel (2024), social media functions as a digital cultural environment in which social practices, identities, and systems of meaning are continuously produced and documented through digital traces, making it an appropriate source of qualitative evidence. This perspective is supported by recent studies (Pindarto et al., 2026), which demonstrate that digital observation enables researchers to capture behavioral patterns, lifestyle preferences, and identity performances among Generation Z within their everyday online interactions.

The observational data were complemented by documentary materials, including photographs, videos, social media posts, online news articles, and publications from the wedding industry. To strengthen the analytical interpretation, an extensive literature review was conducted by examining national and international journal articles, scholarly books, and previous studies published during the last decade that address intimate weddings, digital culture, Generation Z, psychological anthropology, and the transformation of marriage rituals. The integration of these multiple sources enabled a richer contextual understanding of the phenomenon while facilitating the triangulation of empirical and theoretical evidence.

Data analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), involving familiarization with the data, systematic coding, category development, theme generation, and interpretative analysis. An inductive analytical strategy was adopted to synthesize findings derived from digital observation, documentary evidence, and the literature review. The resulting themes were subsequently interpreted through the lens of psychological anthropology, particularly Richard A. Shweder's theory concerning the reciprocal relationship between culture and psychological processes (Kitayama & Yu, 2020), and were further contextualized using the rites of passage framework developed by Arnold van Gennep and expanded by Victor Turner to explain the transformation of marriage rituals. To enhance the credibility of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing evidence across the three datasets, consistent with the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018). Furthermore, the study adhered to the ethical principles of digital research by relying exclusively on publicly available materials and protecting the anonymity of social media users throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that *intimate weddings* do not eliminate the meaning of marriage, but rather transform the way that meaning is produced. While traditional weddings emphasize grandeur, the involvement of extended kin, and the affirmation of family status, *intimate weddings* place greater emphasis on emotional closeness, cost efficiency, comfort, and the couple's control over the course of the event. This shift does not occur in isolation; it nevertheless is closely related to the digitalization of culture, a growing preference for authenticity, and a rejection of consumption logics that place excessive

pressure on young couples. In many cases, simplicity becomes a symbolic strategy to appear sufficient, intimate, and meaningful without having to be luxurious.

Reasons Why Gen Z Chooses *Intimate Weddings*

The findings indicate that Generation Z's preference for *intimate weddings* is shaped by three interrelated factors: economic rationality, identity construction, and digital culture. First, economic considerations play a central role in redefining wedding practices among young adults. A netnographic study of marriage narratives in Indonesian Religious Affairs Offices (KUA) found that simplified wedding ceremonies are primarily motivated by lower financial costs, greater procedural efficiency, and a generational shift that no longer equates lavish celebrations with the ultimate purpose of marriage (Sachu et al., 2024). Similar conclusions were reported by Putri Nabilla and Suci Ramadhona (2025), who found that many members of Generation Z perceive marriage as a highly personal decision that should be carefully aligned with financial stability, educational attainment, and career development. These findings suggest that economic rationality extends beyond financial calculation, reflecting a broader cultural transformation in which marriage is increasingly interpreted as a long-term life investment rather than a one-day ceremonial event.

Second, *intimate weddings* provide couples with greater autonomy to construct and communicate their personal identities. Carter and Duncan (2017) argue that contemporary couples seek to create wedding ceremonies that are simultaneously distinctive, authentic, and socially acceptable. Rather than abandoning tradition altogether, they selectively preserve ritual elements that resonate with their personal values while modifying or excluding practices perceived as incompatible with their lifestyles. From the perspective of psychological anthropology, this selective adaptation illustrates a process of psychological-cultural negotiation, through which individuals reinterpret inherited cultural symbols in ways that support emotional well-being, self-expression, and identity formation. Consequently, *intimate weddings* represent not a rejection of tradition but a reinterpretation of ritual practices that better reflect the aspirations and lived experiences of Generation Z.

Third, the expansion of digital culture has reshaped the symbolic logic through which weddings are experienced and represented. Shamu et al. (2024) demonstrate that social media has intensified the visibility of consumption by encouraging individuals to communicate social status through carefully curated digital content rather than through the material scale of ceremonial events. Within this context, smaller wedding celebrations remain highly visible because they are transformed into aesthetically curated narratives emphasizing intimacy, authenticity, and emotional connection. From an anthropological perspective, this shift does not signify a movement away from consumer culture; instead, it reflects a transition from conspicuous material consumption toward more selective and symbolically meaningful forms of consumption. For Generation Z, the value of a wedding is therefore increasingly measured by its emotional resonance and symbolic authenticity rather than by the number of guests or the magnitude of the celebration.

Table 1. Comparison Between *Traditional Weddings* and *Intimate weddings*

Aspect	Traditional Wedding	Intimate Wedding
Main Focus	Social recognition and public grandeur	Personal meaning and emotional closeness
Audience	Large scale (extended relatives & colleagues)	Limited to family and close friends
Cost Management	High budget for large-scale logistics	More controlled allocation of funds/post-wedding use
Prestige Symbol	Scale of the event and number of guests	Aesthetic curation and authenticity of the atmosphere

Source. Compiled by the researcher (2026)

The comparison presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the distinction between traditional weddings and *intimate weddings* extends beyond differences in the scale of celebration, reflecting a broader transformation in cultural values, symbolic meanings, and Generation Z's understanding of marriage. In traditional wedding ceremonies, the primary emphasis is placed on achieving social recognition through large-scale receptions attended by extended family members, colleagues, acquaintances, and wider social networks. Within this framework, the size of the event and the number of guests function as important symbols of family prestige, social status, and adherence to established cultural expectations. By contrast, *intimate weddings* prioritize emotional significance, meaningful interpersonal interactions, and the presence of close family members and intimate friends, indicating a shift from collective social display toward personal experience and relational quality.

This transformation is equally evident in the allocation of financial resources and the symbolic construction of prestige. Whereas traditional weddings typically require substantial expenditures for venues, catering, decorations, and large guest capacities, *intimate weddings* encourage a more strategic distribution of financial resources by prioritizing long-term post-marital needs, including housing, savings, and future family planning. At the same time, the markers of social prestige have undergone significant redefinition. Rather than being measured by the magnitude of the celebration, prestige is increasingly expressed through authenticity, carefully curated aesthetics, emotional atmosphere, and visual documentation that reflects the couple's personal identity. These findings suggest that the transition toward *intimate weddings* represents not merely the simplification of ceremonial practices but a fundamental reconfiguration of the cultural meaning of marriage.

From the perspective of psychological anthropology, this transformation can be interpreted as a process of cultural reinterpretation in which individuals actively negotiate inherited traditions with emerging personal values. Marriage continues to function as an important social institution; however, its symbolic expressions, ritual practices, and cultural orientations are selectively reconstructed to accommodate contemporary aspirations for authenticity, psychological well-being, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. This pattern is consistent with Richard A. Shweder's view that cultural practices and

psychological processes are mutually constitutive, as well as with the rites of passage framework developed by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, which emphasizes that rituals continuously evolve while preserving their essential social functions. Accordingly, *intimate weddings* should not be interpreted as the abandonment of marriage traditions but rather as an adaptive cultural transformation through which Generation Z reconciles inherited collective values with the individualistic orientations of an increasingly digital society

Psychological and Cultural Negotiation in the Emergence of Intimate Weddings

From the perspective of psychological anthropology, Generation Z's preference for *intimate weddings* should be understood as the outcome of an ongoing process of psychological and cultural negotiation rather than as a simple response to social media trends. Digital observations of wedding-related content on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube revealed that couples generally retain the essential components of marriage rituals including the marriage contract (*akad nikah*), family prayers, and parental blessings while deliberately simplifying ceremonial elements that are perceived as lacking personal significance. These findings indicate that Generation Z does not reject cultural traditions but instead selectively reinterprets ritual symbols to accommodate emotional needs, economic realities, and contemporary identities. This interpretation is consistent with Shweder's (2012) theoretical perspective, which argues that cultural meanings and psychological processes are mutually constitutive, allowing individuals to actively reconstruct cultural practices through lived experience and social interaction. Similar conclusions were reported by Kusumaaningrum et al. (2025), who found that simplified wedding ceremonies represent a form of cultural adaptation integrating religious values, economic efficiency, and relational priorities while preserving the sacred meaning of marriage. Collectively, these findings demonstrate a shift from collective ritual performance toward a more relational and psychologically meaningful understanding of marriage within contemporary Indonesian society.

The negotiation process further suggests that *intimate weddings* constitute a contemporary form of the rites of passage rather than a departure from ritual traditions. According to Van Gennep et al. (2018), rites of passage involve three sequential phases separation, transition, and incorporation through which individuals acquire new social identities. Expanding this framework, Turner and Abrahams (2017) emphasize the concept of liminality as a transitional stage in which identities are continuously negotiated and reconstructed. The present findings indicate that this liminal process begins well before the wedding ceremony itself, emerging when couples decide to limit the number of guests, prioritize close family members, and redirect financial resources toward post-marital life. These decisions illustrate an ongoing negotiation among family expectations, cultural obligations, and personal aspirations. Consequently, *intimate weddings* should be interpreted not merely as simplified wedding receptions but as symbolic reconstructions of marriage rituals that redefine how social status and cultural identity are expressed. This interpretation is reinforced by Mariska and Sumardijjati (2025), who demonstrate that exposure to digital narratives such as *Marriage is Scary* encourages Generation Z to approach marriage more reflectively by emphasizing emotional

readiness, economic stability, and relationship quality rather than ceremonial grandeur.

The findings also reveal that social media functions as a dynamic cultural arena where Generation Z continuously reflects upon and negotiates the meaning of marriage. Rather than passively imitating online trends, young couples selectively evaluate and adapt digital wedding content according to family values, religious beliefs, financial capacities, and personal emotional experiences. In this sense, digital platforms facilitate the production and circulation of new cultural meanings that reshape ritual practices without eliminating their social significance. These findings support Mamali and Stevens (2020), who argue that contemporary wedding rituals are not disappearing but are reproduced through processes of symbolic negotiation that preserve their function as mechanisms of social recognition and relational legitimacy. Likewise, Aulia et al. (2025) demonstrate that digital narratives surrounding Marriage is Scary have shifted Generation Z's orientation from viewing marriage primarily as a marker of adulthood toward understanding it as a commitment requiring psychological preparedness, emotional security, and sustainable family relationships. Accordingly, this study proposes that *intimate weddings* represent a process of psychological-cultural negotiation, whereby Generation Z reconstructs the rites of passage by integrating inherited traditions, individual experiences, and digital cultural influences into a ritual form that is more reflective, authentic, and responsive to contemporary social realities.

Transformation of the Meaning of Marriage Rituals from the Perspective of Psychological Anthropology

The findings reveal that *intimate weddings* represent a profound transformation in the meaning of marriage rituals, extending beyond a mere simplification of wedding ceremonies. From the perspective of psychological anthropology, Shweder (2012) argues that cultural systems and psychological processes are mutually constitutive, enabling individuals to reinterpret inherited cultural symbols through their lived experiences and social environments. This perspective is reflected in the practices of Generation Z couples, who continue to preserve the sacred elements of marriage including the akad nikah (Islamic marriage contract), family prayers, and parental blessings—while consciously reducing ceremonial components that no longer carry personal significance. Consequently, marriage continues to function as a rite of passage, although its symbolic expressions are reconstructed to emphasize authenticity, emotional well-being, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. These findings extend the theoretical perspectives of Van Gennep et al. (2018) and Turner and Abrahams (2017) by demonstrating that ritual transformation begins long before the wedding ceremony itself, emerging during the process through which couples negotiate the form and meaning of their marriage.

The transformation of marriage rituals is further manifested through the practice of bricolage, whereby Generation Z selectively appropriates, adapts, and recombines cultural traditions without abandoning their fundamental meanings. Rather than rejecting inherited customs, couples retain the essential symbolic components of marriage while modifying elements such as the number of guests, the duration of the celebration, and patterns of ceremonial consumption that no longer correspond to their priorities. This process illustrates how

cultural continuity is maintained through selective reinterpretation rather than cultural discontinuity. Similar observations were reported by Carter and Duncan (2017), who argue that contemporary couples construct the meaning of marriage through symbolic selection instead of rejecting tradition altogether. Within the Indonesian context, this interpretation is supported by Saehu et al. (2024), who identify wedding simplicity as an expression of social and economic rationality, and by Kusumaaningrum et al. (2025), who describe Generation Z wedding practices as a form of cultural adaptation to modernization and digitalization. Accordingly, the practice of bricolage demonstrates that ritual transformation occurs through the reconstruction of cultural symbols while preserving the sacred and social significance of marriage.

Beyond bricolage, the findings indicate that *intimate weddings* function as a space for negotiating family expectations, symbolic meanings, and patterns of consumption. Couples' decisions are not entirely autonomous but are continuously shaped through dialogue with parents, extended family members, cultural traditions, religious norms, and symbolic representations circulating within digital media. This interpretation is consistent with Mamali and Stevens (2020), who conceptualize wedding rituals as a form of display work, through which symbolic performances are negotiated to achieve social recognition and legitimacy. Likewise, Farhan Lutfi (2025) demonstrates that digital media has transformed the aesthetic logic of wedding consumption, while Mariska and Sumardijati (2025) argue that Generation Z increasingly prioritizes psychological preparedness, financial stability, and relationship quality over ceremonial extravagance. Building upon these findings, this study proposes the concept of reflexive ritual minimalism, referring to a contemporary form of marriage ritual that preserves the sacred and social functions of marriage while expressing them through more personal, reflective, and selectively curated symbolic practices. This concept contributes to the development of psychological anthropology by illustrating how cultural traditions are continuously reconstructed through the interaction between inherited collective values, individual psychological experiences, and the cultural dynamics of the digital era.

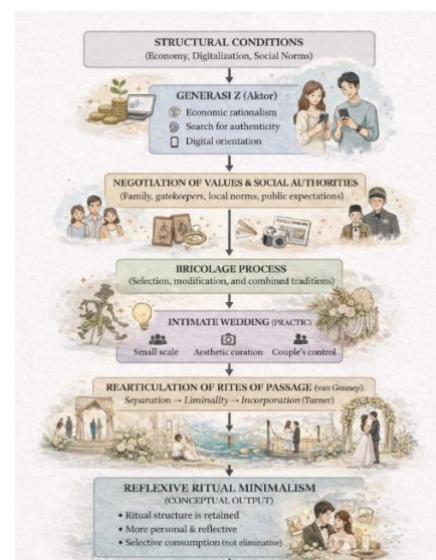


Figure 1. Bricolage Model

Source. Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model developed in this study, illustrating that the emergence of *intimate weddings* among

Generation Z is the product of a dynamic interaction between structural conditions, individual agency, and ongoing processes of social negotiation. Structural factors including economic constraints, digitalization, and changing social norms shape the rationality through which Generation Z redefines marriage practices. Within this context, couples engage in bricolage by selectively preserving, modifying, and recombining elements of traditional wedding rituals in ways that accommodate both cultural expectations and their psychological needs. This adaptive process is continuously negotiated with parents, extended family members, cultural gatekeepers, customary norms, and broader public expectations, resulting in a form of marriage ritual that is more personal while remaining socially legitimate as a rite of passage, consistent with the framework proposed by Van Gennep et al. (2018) and further elaborated through Turner's concept of liminality (Turner & Abrahams, 2017).

From the perspective of psychological anthropology, this model demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between culture and psychological processes described by Shweder (2012). Rather than passively reproducing inherited traditions, Generation Z actively reconstructs the symbolic meaning of marriage by integrating cultural values with personal experiences, emotional aspirations, and contemporary social contexts. Consequently, the conceptual model advances the argument that *intimate weddings* should not be understood simply as smaller or less elaborate wedding celebrations. Instead, they represent a process of psychological-cultural negotiation through which traditional marriage rituals are reinterpreted and reconstructed. Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of reflexive ritual minimalism, referring to a contemporary ritual practice that preserves the sacred and social functions of marriage while expressing them through more personal, reflective, and selectively curated forms of symbolic representation and cultural consumption. This conceptual contribution extends the literature on psychological anthropology by explaining how ritual transformation occurs through the continuous interaction between inherited cultural traditions, individual psychological agency, and the socio-cultural dynamics of the digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *intimate weddings* among Generation Z should not be interpreted merely as a simplified form of wedding celebration but as a broader transformation in the cultural meaning of marriage rituals shaped through continuous processes of psychological and cultural negotiation. The findings indicate that this transformation emerges from the interaction of economic rationality, digitalization, shifting social norms, and Generation Z's increasing emphasis on authenticity, emotional well-being, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Rather than abandoning tradition, couples engage in bricolage by selectively preserving, modifying, and recombining ritual elements that continue to hold sacred value while negotiating these practices with family members, customary norms, and wider social expectations. Consequently, marriage remains a socially legitimate rite of passage, although its symbolic expressions are reconstructed to reflect contemporary cultural values. These findings extend the theoretical perspectives of Van Gennep's rites of passage, Turner's concept of liminality, and Shweder's psychological anthropology by

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demonstrating that ritual meanings are continuously produced through the reciprocal interaction between cultural structures and individual psychological experiences. Based on this evidence, the study proposes the concept of reflexive ritual minimalism to explain how marriage rituals in the digital era preserve their sacred and social functions while being expressed through more personal, reflective, and selectively curated symbolic practices.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis relied primarily on digital documentation, social media observation, and literature review, limiting direct access to couples' subjective experiences, family negotiations, and ritual practices occurring in natural settings. Furthermore, the case study design does not permit broad generalization because it does not compare intimate wedding practices across different ethnic groups, cultural traditions, religious communities, or regional contexts within Indonesia. Future studies are therefore encouraged to combine digital ethnography with field-based ethnographic research, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and comparative studies across diverse cultural settings. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how local traditions, religious values, social class, and intergenerational relationships shape the evolving meanings of marriage rituals. In addition, future research should further examine and refine the concept of reflexive ritual minimalism across different cultural communities and generational groups to strengthen its theoretical applicability and enrich the development of psychological anthropology in explaining ritual transformation within contemporary societies.

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