

Standing Out, Fitting In: Socially Single Young Women's Experience of Contradicting Normative Romantic Relationship Development

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Abstract. Despite the growing trend to delay marriage and parenthood, the gendered expectations for women to marry remains pervasive in most of Indonesian societies. The purpose of this study was to explore the singlehood experience in socially single women of marriageable age. Using descriptive phenomenology approach, 11 interview sessions with 3 socially single women in their mid-late 20s were conducted to understand the experience of women who are partner-less and of marriageable age. One major theme, "*Standing Out, Fitting In*" emerged. The women in this study experienced of both interpersonal and intrapersonal pressure to marry highlighting the consequence of going against the expected romantic relationship development, making them stand out in comparison to most of the women their age who were either in relationship or married. However, they also found the appeal of being single. As they felt unready, being single was to avoid potential downsides of being in relationship. They were also able to enjoy the freedom to self-explore, to prepare themselves for a good and long-lasting future relationship. The implication of sociocultural context on the psychological dynamic of single women of marriageable age and individualized transition to adulthood is discussed.

Keywords: single women, transition to adulthood, marital pressure