

# Staying Single or Saying “I Do”: Exploring Well-Being Differences among Adolescents in Abu Dhabi

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## Abstract

This study examines the well-being differences between adolescents aged 15 - 19 in Abu Dhabi who intend to marry and those who do not, using data from the 5th Quality of Life survey. The analysis focuses on various well-being indicators, including subjective physical and mental health, social relationships, and life satisfaction. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA are employed to identify significant differences between the two groups. The results reveal that adolescents intending to marry experience higher levels of anxiety but report greater social engagement, life satisfaction, healthy lifestyle behaviours (eating healthy food, and sport and activities), and religious practices (often practising religion) compared to their peers who do not plan to marry. However, no significant differences were observed in indicators such as sadness, loneliness, and trust in others, suggesting that marital intentions influence some aspects of adolescent well-being less. These findings highlight the complex interplay of social, psychological, and behavioural factors shaping adolescent well-being, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

## Keywords

Adolescents, Marital Intention, Well-Being, Social Engagement, Mental Health, Abu Dhabi

## 1. Introduction

This study examines the well-being determinants and variables that differentiate

between single respondents who intend to marry and those who do not. This research is significant as it addresses a growing area of interest within the broader field of social and mental well-being. Understanding the well-being differences between those who intend to marry and those who do not can offer insights into the factors that influence life satisfaction, emotional health, and social connections within this demographic group. The findings will contribute valuable knowledge to the ongoing discussions surrounding marriage trends, societal expectations, and individual well-being, particularly in the context of Abu Dhabi's unique socio-cultural environment. Given the potential impact of this research on public policy and the development of well-being initiatives, the study can play an important role in shaping programs aimed at enhancing life satisfaction and support for singles in the region.

Research has consistently shown that marital status can impact various well-being indicators, such as life satisfaction, mental health, and physical health. The classic study by Diener *et al.* (2000a) explores how marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood influence life satisfaction, indicating that married individuals tend to report higher well-being. Some studies explore how the intention to marry or the desire to remain single influences well-being (Sagalova *et al.*, 2021). People intending to marry often show better mental well-being compared to those who have no plans, potentially due to social and cultural expectations (Huntington *et al.*, 2022) or the stable relationships and associated emotional support (Ludvigh Cintulova & Lucia, 2021). It is worth mentioning that these studies are often conducted in different contexts and with specific focuses and caution that the effect varies by individual circumstances (Diener *et al.*, 2000a). Thus, contrasting arguments are not uncommon. For example, Chapman and Guven (2016) revisited the marriage and well-being relationship using data from the US, the UK and Germany and concluded that there was no strong link from happiness to marriage, as self-assessed quality of marriage matters when comparing the likelihood of happier people staying single against those being unhappily married and those being happily married.

Cultural norms may shape intentions toward marriage and their subsequent impact on well-being. In societies where marriage is highly valued, individuals who intend to marry might feel a sense of security, social belonging, or purpose (Borau *et al.*, 2022). Some studies argue that singles who embrace their lifestyle and have no intention of marrying can experience high levels of life satisfaction, contrasting with singles who feel societal pressure to marry (Tan *et al.*, 2021). However, Diener *et al.* (2000b) found that associations between marital status and subjective well-being were very similar across the world in a sample of 59,169 persons in 42 nations, suggesting a limited influence of culture.

Socioeconomic status, gender, and other demographic factors often influence whether someone intends to marry, which in turn affects their well-being. The study by Ludvigh Cintulova and Radkova (2021) explores how financial security, educational attainment, and job stability predict marital intentions and how these

intentions shape personal satisfaction and mental health. [Matud et al. \(2019\)](#) looked at how men and women differ in their reasons for intending to marry and how these intentions affect their mental and emotional well-being.

The focus of this research on the 15 - 19 age group is a strategic choice given the distinct developmental, social, and psychological characteristics of adolescence, further justified by the following section of literature review. In regions like Abu Dhabi, understanding the marital intentions of adolescents can inform policymakers about future demographic trends. If a large proportion of adolescents reject or postpone marriage, this could impact social policies related to family, education, housing, and economic planning.

## 2. Literature Review

Adolescence is a key developmental period marked by identity exploration, emotional maturation, and the formation of long-term social and romantic aspirations. Individuals in this age range are navigating complex questions about their future, including marriage and relationships, which makes them an important group for understanding marital intentions ([Arnold, 2017](#)). In their book, [Backes & Bonnie \(2019\)](#) stress that adolescence is a period of significant development that begins with the onset of puberty and ends in the mid-20s. The trajectory during this age involves a profound amount of change in all domains of development—biological, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional. Personal relationships and settings also change during this period, as peers and romantic partners become more central and as the adolescent moves into and then beyond secondary school or gains employment. [Scales et al. \(2015\)](#) draw on the theoretical and empirical literature to name the core dimensions of successful young adult development, including social, health, psychological, behavioural, educational, occupational, ethical, and civic dimensions, and suggest that only a minority of adolescents are well-prepared to make a transition to successful young adulthood.

Adolescents in the 15-19 age range are typically still in high school or beginning higher education, and their focus on academic and career development strongly influences their intentions about marriage. Research has shown that adolescents who prioritize education tend to delay marital intentions, making this a key aspect to explore. Some discuss how educational goals often lead to a postponement or rejection of early marriage plans among adolescents ([Alcaraz et al., 2022](#)). Research by [Hyseni Duraku et al. \(2020\)](#) concluded that early marriage has a negative influence on youngsters' pursuits toward higher education, with considerable health and social impact. They added that educational aspirations, career goals, and early marriage are associated with numerous personal and contextual factors.

Adolescents today are growing up in a social environment where traditional norms around marriage and relationships are evolving. The study of [Abdurahman et al. \(2023\)](#) showed that in Eastern Ethiopia adolescent girls' early marriage intention was higher among those with positive attitude toward early marriage, as there is strong social norm in the community that promotes intention for an early

marriage among adolescent girls. However, the pressure to marry early is diminishing, especially in more urbanized or economically developed regions, where adolescents are prioritizing education, career goals, and self-development over marriage (Beal et al., 2016). This makes it valuable to study how these changing norms influence their intentions to marry. Keldal and Seker (2022) pointed out that young adults' priorities in their life plans are significantly predicted by marital salience, marital readiness status and self-efficacy in making career plan. Studies explore how economic opportunities have delayed marriage intentions among young adults, particularly in urbanized regions (Sagalova et al., 2021).

Adolescents are particularly sensitive to social expectations, including those related to marriage and relationships. The pressure (or lack thereof) to marry can have significant implications for their mental well-being. Research shows that by focusing on the 15 - 19 age group, we could explore how such societal pressures impact their psychological health and decision-making processes (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). Some studies illustrate how societal norms regarding marriage and future planning influence the mental well-being of adolescents, leading to varying levels of anxiety, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Plotnick, 2007). Handayani et al. (2022) provide a literature review of early marriage and its negative impacts, including reproductive health, and the impact on adolescent emotions. The study by Nhampoca and Maritz (2024) summarizes the significant influences of early marriage on adolescent interpersonal connections, educational and career opportunities, emotional well-being, and access to support networks. Similarly, the research by Hynek et al. (2022) shows that unmarried and early married women had increased odds of mental disorders when compared to on-time married women. However, the differences between the early and on-time married women are explained by differences in educational level.

Adopting a conceptual framework that combines family context, opportunity cost, and social-psychological perspectives, Plotnick (2007) analysed adolescents' desires for marriage and parenthood. Results showed that race, ethnicity, gender, parental education, and parental expectations for their child's education demonstrate significant relationships with expectations and desires about marriage and parenthood. Adolescents with higher opportunity costs, as indicated by better grades and higher expectations for their schooling, desire to marry and have children at older ages (Plotnick, 2007). Research by Parsons et al. (2015) reveals the significance of socio-economic status, education levels, and community context also influence the likelihood of an early marriage.

Adolescents today are significantly influenced by digital media, which shapes their perceptions of relationships and marriage. Many are exposed to alternative lifestyles and evolving concepts of marriage, which could explain why a considerable proportion of youth may reject traditional marital intentions. Several studies discuss how online content and social media platforms influence adolescents' views on relationships, marriage, and their future plans (van Ouytsel et al., 2019). The research by Novianti et al. (2023) during the COVID-19 pandemic, when social media became the primary choice for teenagers, showed that high number of

early marriages in Indonesia occurred and social media was one of the causes of the increasing number of early marriages.

### 3. Methods and Design

The 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of Quality-of-Life survey in Abu Dhabi (QoL5) reached residents aged 15 and above across all regions of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Ethical approval for the survey was granted by both the Department of Community Development and Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi. Conducted from January to June 2024, the QoL5 survey was disseminated to individuals registered in various accessible databases maintained by government departments, public community associations, as well as through social media platforms and numerous public events held in Abu Dhabi. The QoL5 in the end collected 100,046 usable responses. The current research focuses on adolescents, i.e., the 15 - 19 age group, which total 5,869 respondents. The adolescent responses (ages 15 - 19) comprised approximately 6,000 individuals, reflecting various socio-economic, educational, and geographic backgrounds. These efforts were aligned with Abu Dhabi's population distribution to achieve representativeness and minimize sampling bias. The study acknowledges that external social pressures and life circumstances can influence anxiety levels in adolescents intending to marry. While marital intentions are a key focus, the analysis incorporates multiple well-being determinants, such as family satisfaction, trust in others, and social support, to account for broader contextual factors. These variables help to disentangle the unique impact of marital intentions from external pressures.

Utilizing various international well-being frameworks, the QoL5 survey comprehensively addressed subjective indicators drawn from prominent sources such as the OECD's Better Life Index, the World Happiness Report, the Gallup Global Well-being Survey, and the European Quality of Life Survey. Thus, the survey incorporated a diverse array of dimensions and factors thought to influence the well-being of Abu Dhabi residents, ranging from housing, income, employment, to health, education, safety, and social connections. For the current research, the focus centres on the question asking respondents to specify their intention to get married. In addition to demographic data such as gender, nationality, education level, area of living, health status, the well-being items examined in the analysis covered mental health, physical health, availability of social support, participation in social groups, social trust, isolation, family quality time, satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with social relationships, hours online, major concerns about digital transformation, and life satisfaction.

The research utilized descriptive statistics to provide an initial understanding of the well-being determinants for the two groups of adolescents: those with the intention of getting married and those without. Descriptive statistics allows for a clear presentation of the data, highlighting patterns and differences in key variables such as mental health, life satisfaction, and social connections between the two groups. In addition, the study applied Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test

whether the observed differences in well-being determinants between the two groups are statistically significant. ANOVA enables the comparison of means across multiple well-being indicators and assess whether group membership (intention to marry or not) has a significant effect on these determinants. By combining descriptive statistics with ANOVA, the study provided a deeper and statistically validated understanding of how marital intentions influence well-being among adolescents.

#### 4. Results

**Table 1** shows the numbers and percentages of the adolescents participating in the study, with their demographic characteristics compared between the two groups of adolescents: those with intention to marry and those without. Among the adolescents, 542 males (23.4%) and 1,220 females (33.7%) indicated no intention to marry, while 1,720 males (76.6%) and 2,405 females (66.3%) reported positively to their marital intentions. The group with no intention to marry consisted of 883 Emirati adolescents, 34.1% of total Emirati adolescents in the sample, and 861 non-Emiratis (26.3%). Among those with disabilities, 37.8% said “No” while 62.2% said “Yes”. For those without disabilities, 29.4% responded “No”. For adolescents with longstanding illnesses, 31.2% said “No” to intending to marry, while 68.8% indicated “Yes”. The proportion of adolescents with no intention to marry varies by age, with the highest percentage at age 15 (36.3%) and the lowest at age 18 and 19 (19.4% and 21.0%, respectively). In terms of distribution by region, 27.8% living in Abu Dhabi region said “No”, while 36.7% in Al Ain region and 34.9% in Al Dhafra region indicated “No”.

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents.

	No, I will not	Yes, I will
Gender		
Male	542 (23.4%)	1,720 (76.6%)
Female	1,220 (33.7%)	2,405 (66.3%)
Nationality		
Emirati	883 (34.1%)	1,710 (65.9%)
Non-Emirati	861 (26.3%)	2,415 (73.7%)
Disability		
Yes, with disability	73 (37.8%)	120 (62.2%)
No disability	1,671 (29.4%)	4,005 (70.6%)
Having longstanding illness		
Yes	217 (31.2%)	478 (68.8%)
No	1,418 (29.1%)	3,456 (70.9%)
Age		
15	1,054 (36.3%)	1,849 (63.7%)
16	354 (27.5%)	935 (72.5%)
17	201 (20.0%)	802 (80.0%)
18	81 (19.4%)	336 (80.6%)
19	54 (21.0%)	203 (79.0%)
Region		

## Continued

Abu Dhabi	1,262 (27.8%)	3,285 (72.2%)
Al Ain	422 (36.7%)	728 (63.3%)
Al Dhafra	60 (34.9%)	112 (65.1%)

The finding that a sizeable portion of adolescents have expressed no intention to marry is intriguing, given that younger individuals are facing evolving physical and emotional development. **Table 2** shows the descriptive statistics on mental and physical health variables and ANOVA results comparing the differences between the two groups of with or without the intention to get married. Among the indicators, “feeling worried or anxious” emerged as the only mental health determinant that showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with a p-value of 0.020 ( $F = 5.401$ ). The “No” group (mean = 2.771) reported a lower level of worry or anxiety compared to the “Yes” group (mean = 2.864), suggesting that adolescents who do not intend to marry experience slightly less anxiety than those who do. For all other indicators in **Table 2**, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups.

**Table 2.** Means of mental and physical health determinants and ANOVA results.

	No	Yes	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Feeling sad, low or depressed	2.584	2.606	0.532	1	0.532	0.301	0.583
Feeling worried or anxious	2.771	2.864	10.111	1	10.111	5.401	0.020
Difficulty in concentrating/ remembering	2.878	2.863	0.263	1	0.263	0.146	0.703
Feeling physical pain	2.162	2.147	0.253	1	0.253	0.169	0.681
Feeling feared	2.219	2.150	5.527	1	5.527	3.126	0.077
Feeling lonely	2.255	2.233	0.558	1	0.558	0.288	0.591
Feeling bored	3.105	3.106	0.000	1	0.000	0.000	0.997
Emotional stress level	3.965	4.017	3.037	1	3.037	0.312	0.576
Self-rated physical health	3.557	3.613	3.613	1	3.613	2.994	0.084

Note: for the first seven variables, a higher mean reflects a greater extent of recent mental feelings.

**Table 3** presents ANOVA results for social connections related indicators between the two groups. Significant differences are observed on several indicators. The “Yes” group (mean = 3.830) reported a higher frequency of meeting with friends than the “No” group (mean = 3.578), indicating that adolescents who intend to marry tend to be more socially active. Adolescents who intend to marry (mean = 4.270) reported a higher satisfaction with family life compared to those who do not (mean = 3.963), suggesting stronger familial bonds among the “Yes”

group. The “Yes” group (mean = 3.725) also reported greater satisfaction with social relationships than the “No” group (mean = 3.590), indicating a higher level of social fulfilment for those intending to marry. In addition, adolescents who intend to marry (mean = 4.070) reported having more people who could provide support when needed compared to those who do not intend to marry (mean = 3.863), suggesting wider social networks among the “Yes” group. However, social trust, feeling of social isolation, and family quality time did not show significant differences between the two groups.

**Table 3.** Means of social connections determinants and ANOVA results.

	No	Yes	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Frequency of meeting friends	3.578	3.830	77.287	1	77.287	32.390	0.001
Social trust	2.688	2.680	0.085	1	0.085	0.072	0.788
Frequency of feeling isolated	2.608	2.573	1.477	1	1.477	1.086	0.297
Quality family time	3,513	3,516	0.007	1	0.007	0.005	0.946
Satisfaction with family life	3.963	4.270	13.836	1	13.836	12.059	0.001
Satisfaction with social relationships	3.590	3.725	22.202	1	22.202	24.892	0.001
Size of social support network	3.863	4.070	13.836	1	13.836	12.059	0.001

**Table 4** presents ANOVA results for life satisfaction, happiness, and expected life satisfaction after 5 years among the two groups of adolescents. On life Satisfaction ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $F = 12.516$ ), there is a significant difference between the two groups. Adolescents who intend to marry reported higher life satisfaction (mean = 6.9213) compared to those who do not intend to marry (mean = 6.6403). Likewise, the “Yes” group also exhibited significantly higher levels of happiness compared to the “No” group. This suggests that those with marital intentions perceive their current life circumstances more positively than those who do not have marriage intentions. There was no significant difference between the two groups regarding their expectations for life satisfaction in the future.

**Table 4.** Means of subjective well-being and ANOVA results.

	No	Yes	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Life satisfaction	6.6403	6.9213	91.961	1	91.961	12.516	0.000
Happiness	7.7503	7.9685	55.453	1	55.453	9.522	0.002
Life satisfaction after 5 years	4.586	4.532	3.337	1	3.337	2.274	0.132

**Table 5** further compares various additional indicators for adolescents who intend to marry and those who do not. On the two lifestyle related indicators – frequency of eating healthy food and doing sports or physical exercise, there is a significant difference between the two groups, with adolescents who intend to marry reporting healthier eating behaviours and more active lifestyle. Adolescents who intend to marry also reported higher frequency of religious practice (mean = 4.373) than those who do not (mean = 4.128), suggesting that religion may play a more significant role in the lives of those planning to marry. A same pattern is found with the variable “trust in health system” ( $p = 0.010$ ,  $F = 6.585$ ). The “No” group, however, showed higher trust in the media than the “Yes” group, indicating a divergent perception of media reliability based on marital intentions. Adolescents who intend to marry felt safer when alone at night compared to those who do not intend to marry. There was no significant difference between the two groups in their responses to those two education related indicators, indicating that adolescents’ views on the education system are not influenced by their marital intentions.

**Table 5.** Means of additional well-being indicators and ANOVA results.

	No	Yes	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Frequency of eating healthy food	3.464	3.547	7.644	1	7.644	9.918	0.002
Frequency of doing sport	3.283	3.553	85.510	1	85.510	20.613	0.000
Satisfaction with school system	3.522	3.510	4.177	1	4.177	1.199	0.174
Frequency of practicing religion	4.128	4.373	67.660	1	67.660	58.807	0.000
Trust in health system	4.272	4.338	5.039	1	5.039	6.585	0.010
Trust in education system	3.829	3.842	0.180	1	0.180	0.138	0.710
Trust in the media	3.840	3.733	12.944	1	12.944	11.151	0.001
Feeling safe alone at night	4.354	4.493	22.506	1	22.506	26.184	0.000

Finally, **Table 6** shows the results of ANOVA tests regarding the perceived impact of digital transformation on health, social activities, cyber security, work and employment, and the young generation, with no significant differences between adolescents who intend to marry and those who do not. The descriptive statistics and ANOVA results indicate that both groups perceive the impact of digital transformation similarly.

**Table 6.** Means of perceived impact of digital transformation and ANOVA results.

	No	YES	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social activity	2.98	3.00	0.247	1	0.247	0.214	0.644
Health and activity	2.99	3.02	1.038	1	1.038	0.755	0.385
Mental health	2.98	2.99	0.042	1	0.042	0.029	0.864
The young generation	3.02	3.06	1.784	1	1.784	1.091	0.296
Security/cyber crime	2.98	3.05	4.614	1	4.614	3.007	0.083
work/employment	3.00	3.01	0.088	1	0.088	0.070	0.791

## 5. Discussions

Adolescents, particularly in the 15 - 19 age range, are in a period of identity exploration and may not have fully developed intentions regarding long-term life commitments like marriage. In some cultural contexts, however, young individuals might delay thinking about marriage due to educational or career priorities. In societies that have undergone drastic socioeconomic changes like Abu Dhabi, increased opportunities for education and economic mobility may have impacted the life goals of adolescents and shifted their focus away from early marriage (Beal et al., 2016). Understanding how these socioeconomic factors influence the marriage intentions of adolescents can provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators.

The analysis of Abu Dhabi adolescents' marital intentions revealed distinct differences in well-being indicators between the groups. The significant difference in the extent of feeling worried or anxious between adolescents who intend to marry and those who do not align with literature suggesting that the pressure of planning for future life roles, such as marriage, can contribute to increased anxiety levels among adolescents (Jensen & Thornton, 2003). Adolescents who intend to marry may experience higher anxiety due to societal expectations and uncertainties associated with fulfilling marital aspirations, which is consistent with Plotnick's (2007) findings on the influence of social norms on adolescent mental well-being. The lack of significant differences in other mental health indicators, such as feeling sadness or emotional stress, suggests that while anxiety is more sensitive to marital intentions, other mental feelings may be similarly experienced by both groups. As noted by Arnold (2017), some negative emotions are universally experienced by adolescents as part of their developmental stage, when identity exploration, academic pressures, and social relationship dynamics interact.

More consistent findings are revealed on the differences in social engagement and connections between adolescents who intend to marry and those who do not. The former group consistently exhibits significantly higher levels of social engagement and satisfaction with family and social relationships and has stronger support networks than the latter. Cultural and social norms surrounding marriage

could enhance social integration and interpersonal relationships (Knox *et al.*, 2008). Our results suggest that adolescents who plan to marry may derive a sense of social belonging and purpose from their intention, which can positively impact their social well-being, which aligns with Bejanyan *et al.*'s (2015) research on the social benefits of marital intentions in collectivist cultures. On the other hand, the non-significant differences found in social trust and feelings of social isolation suggest that these aspects of social relationships are less influenced by marital intentions, which could be due to their stability across different life aspirations (Stone & Harris, 2014).

In addition, significant differences were found in healthy lifestyle and behaviours. Adolescents intending to marry reported healthier lifestyle behaviours and more frequent religious practices, which aligns with the findings of Nhamponca and Maritz (2024), who noted that engagement in structured social or religious activities could reinforce positive health behaviours and well-being. The higher levels of trust in the health system and feelings of safety among those intending to marry further support the notion that social integration and perceived security are associated with marital aspirations (Furstenberg, 2017). However, the greater trust in media observed among adolescents not intending to marry may reflect differing information-seeking behaviours or scepticism towards traditional social structures, including marriage (Berrington, 2016). Moreover, consistent with the research by Diener *et al.* (2000a), our results suggest that adolescents who intend to marry report higher levels of subjective well-being. The similarity in expected life satisfaction after five years between the two groups could indicate that while current perceptions of life satisfaction are influenced by marital intentions, long-term outlooks remain generally optimistic among adolescents, regardless of their marital plans. This finding supports Lundberg's (2013) observation that younger generations may still harbour positive future expectations despite shifting priorities away from early marriage.

The analysis also revealed several well-being indicators where no significant differences emerged between adolescents who intend to marry and those who do not, highlighting areas where marital intentions may not play a crucial role in shaping well-being outcomes. Indicators related to feeling sadness, loneliness, emotional stress, social trust, family quality time, satisfaction with school system, and concerns about the impact of digital transformation did not show significant variations across the two groups. These non-significant findings suggest that some aspects of adolescent life remain relatively stable across different life aspirations (Backes & Bonnie, 2019) and certain aspects of well-being may be influenced by factors other than marital intentions, such as broader socio-environmental conditions, individual personality traits, or life circumstances that are common to adolescents regardless of their future marital plans.

Overall, the results emphasize the complex interplay of social, psychological, and behavioural factors shaping adolescents' well-being in relation to marital intentions. These findings provide insights into how social norms, personal

aspirations, and social connection and support systems influence adolescents' life satisfaction and mental health. The results also suggest potential areas for targeted interventions to support adolescents' development, including addressing anxiety related to future planning and enhancing social support for those who may not conform to traditional marital expectations. These findings imply that while some well-being indicators are sensitive to marital intentions, others may be more broadly shaped by age-related developmental factors and shared environmental contexts. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving adolescent well-being should not solely focus on marital intentions but also address other determinants that contribute to a stable and supportive environment for all adolescents, regardless of their future life plans.

## 6. Conclusion

This study is an exploration of well-being differences among adolescents in Abu Dhabi based on their marital intentions, offering new insights into the factors influencing their life goals and mental health. The findings reveal significant differences in several well-being indicators, including anxiety, social engagement, life satisfaction, healthy lifestyle behaviours, and religious practices. Adolescents who expressed the intention to marry reported higher levels of anxiety, greater social activity and higher life satisfaction, suggesting that their marital aspirations may foster a sense of purpose, connectedness, and optimism about their future. In contrast, adolescents without marital intentions were found to have lower anxiety levels but also reported less social engagement and a diminished sense of purpose in comparison. However, both groups showed similar levels of emotional stress, loneliness, and social trust, indicating that some challenges during adolescence may be universal, regardless of marriage aspirations.

The results carry important implications for efforts to support adolescent well-being. As adolescents are at a formative stage in their personal development, understanding the interplay between marital intentions and well-being is crucial. The findings suggest that those intending to marry may face heightened anxiety, possibly due to future planning pressures, even as they enjoy greater social benefits. These insights point to the importance of fostering environments where young people, regardless of their marital aspirations, can thrive emotionally, socially, and physically. Programs focusing on mental health support, social engagement, and healthy lifestyles are essential to ensure that all young people receive the support they need. Promoting spiritual development and media literacy among youth could further enhance their well-being and resilience in a rapidly evolving social landscape.

These findings provide valuable insights that can guide the development of targeted adolescent well-being programs in Abu Dhabi. By addressing the specific needs of adolescents intending to marry, such as mental health support and social connection initiatives, policymakers and practitioners can create culturally sensitive interventions that enhance resilience and overall quality of life among this

demographic.

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, and the focus on the 15 - 19 age group limits generalizability to other age ranges. Expanding the scope to include other age groups and incorporating qualitative methods would also provide deeper insights into the personal and cultural factors influencing these outcomes. Additionally, the cross-sectional design precludes establishing causality between marital intentions and well-being. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach to explore how changes in marital intentions affect well-being over time. Future research could explore the role of socioeconomic factors, such as family income and parental education, in shaping adolescent well-being and marital intentions, as these variables may provide deeper insights into the underlying drivers of well-being disparities within this demographic. Future research should also examine how the intention to marry differs between genders and its relationship with well-being indicators, as well as explore other biographic features such as nationality, educational attainment, and urban versus rural residence, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics.

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### **Ethical Approval**

Ethical consent regarding the protocol of the study was granted by the Department of Community Development (DCD) and the Statistic Centre Abu Dhabi (SCAD). Written informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

### **Competing Interests**

The authors declare no competing interests.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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