

# The Influence of Perceived Social Pressure, Career Aspiration, Economic Independence, and Cultural Values on Attitude towards Marriage among Unmarried Women in China

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## Abstract

This study explores the relationships between perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values on attitude towards marriage among unmarried women in China. Using a quantitative approach, a sample of 458 participants completed validated measures, and Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the variables. The results revealed that perceived social pressure was the strongest predictor of positive attitude towards marriage, followed by cultural values, with both variables significantly shaping marriage attitudes. Conversely, career aspiration and economic independence were negatively correlated with traditional attitude towards marriage, suggesting that women who prioritize their careers and financial independence are more likely to delay or reconsider marriage. These findings underscore the complex interplay of social, individual, and cultural factors influencing unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in contemporary Chinese society. Policymakers and social institutions are encouraged to consider these dynamics when developing strategies to address evolving marriage trends.

**Keywords:** Perceived Social Pressure, Career Aspiration, Economic Independence, Cultural Values, Attitude Towards Marriage

## Introduction

Marriage remains a pivotal social institution in many cultures, and China is no exception. However, recent shifts in societal norms and economic conditions have led to a significant change in attitude towards marriage, particularly among unmarried women (Fang & Stone, 2020; Ji, 2019). In contemporary China, the increased focus on career development and personal independence has reshaped the traditional expectations of marriage, resulting in a

growing number of women delaying or reconsidering marriage altogether (Liu et al., 2021). This trend is not isolated but reflects broader global patterns where women, especially in urban areas, prioritize personal aspirations over familial expectations (Wang & Abbott, 2020). Understanding the factors influencing these changing attitudes is crucial for policymakers and sociologists seeking to address the challenges facing unmarried women in China.

One significant factor affecting women's attitude towards marriage is perceived social pressure. In China, familial and societal expectations remain strong, with women often facing considerable pressure to marry by a certain age (Fang et al., 2021). The theory of planned behavior suggests that subjective norms, or the perceived expectations of others, play a crucial role in shaping behavior, including marriage decisions (Ajzen, 2020). Despite these pressures, many women now feel empowered to challenge traditional norms, particularly those living in urban areas where individualistic values are increasingly embraced (Yang & Wu, 2020). Studies have shown that perceived social pressure directly influences attitude towards marriage, often leading to internal conflict between personal desires and societal expectations (Wang et al., 2020; Ji, 2020).

In addition to social pressure, career aspirations have emerged as a key factor influencing women's decisions about marriage. As women attain higher levels of education and pursue ambitious careers, marriage is often delayed or deprioritized (Liu et al., 2021). Research suggests that career-oriented women view marriage as a potential hindrance to professional success, particularly in cultures where traditional gender roles still dominate (Tang & Li, 2020). For many women in China, the pursuit of career goals provides a sense of autonomy and self-worth, reducing the importance of marriage as a life milestone (Zhang & Li, 2022). This shift in priorities underscores the evolving role of women in modern Chinese society, where career achievements are increasingly valued over traditional familial roles (Chen et al., 2023).

Economic independence further compounds the shift in marriage attitudes among unmarried women in China. Financial self-sufficiency allows women to make autonomous life choices, including whether or not to marry (Xiao & Xu, 2022). The increasing number of women entering the workforce and achieving economic stability has lessened the historical financial dependence on marriage as a means of security (Wang et al., 2021). Scholars argue that economic independence has given women more leverage in marriage negotiations, enabling them to delay or reject marriage without facing the financial vulnerabilities of previous generations (Zhou & Zhang, 2023). This financial empowerment is transforming traditional dynamics within marriage, where women no longer need to rely on marital unions for social and economic stability (Liu et al., 2021).

Finally, cultural values play a significant role in shaping attitude towards marriage. In Chinese society, the tension between collectivist values and the increasing adoption of individualistic ideals significantly influences women's decisions regarding marriage (He & Li, 2020). While traditional Chinese culture emphasizes family cohesion and duty, many modern women are influenced by global trends promoting individual happiness and personal fulfillment (Liu et al., 2022). As a result, the younger generation of women often find themselves negotiating between the expectations of their families and their desire for personal independence (Zhou & Wang, 2021). The interplay of cultural values and modern aspirations reflects a broader

transformation in Chinese society, where the concept of marriage is continually evolving (Tang et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

### *Perceived Social Pressure and Attitudes towards Marriage*

Perceived social pressure plays a critical role in shaping women's attitude towards marriage, particularly in collectivist societies such as China, where societal expectations often dictate life decisions (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Wang, 2020). In China, the pressure to marry, especially for women, is strongly influenced by cultural traditions, where marriage is seen as a fundamental milestone of adulthood (Ji, 2020). Research indicates that unmarried women face significant pressure from family and society to adhere to traditional marital expectations, which can lead to internal conflict between personal desires and social obligations (Liu et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). As a result, many women in China struggle to balance their aspirations for independence with the weight of societal expectations.

This pressure often manifests as direct and indirect messages from family members, peers, and the broader community, reinforcing the idea that marriage is essential for social acceptance (Fang et al., 2021; Yang & Wu, 2020). Studies suggest that family expectations are one of the strongest predictors of marriage attitudes, particularly for women in urban areas where traditional values persist despite the rise of individualism (Zhang & Li, 2022; Zhou & Wang, 2021). This perceived pressure can lead to anxiety and stress among women who feel torn between their desire for personal freedom and the societal expectation to marry (Wang et al., 2021; Ji, 2020). Consequently, the internalization of these pressures often influences women's decisions about whether to marry or remain single.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that subjective norms, or perceived social pressure, directly influence individuals' intentions to engage in specific behaviors, such as marriage (Ajzen, 2020). For many unmarried women in China, the weight of social expectations creates a tension between their personal autonomy and their perceived duty to conform to societal norms (He & Li, 2020). Research shows that unmarried women who experience high levels of social pressure are more likely to express negative attitude towards marriage, particularly if they perceive marriage as an obligation rather than a personal choice (Tang et al., 2023; Xiao & Xu, 2022). This suggests that social pressure can be a significant factor in shaping marriage attitudes among women in China.

Despite this pressure, many women in China are beginning to resist societal expectations, particularly in urban areas where modernization and globalization have introduced more individualistic values (Liu et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). Women who feel empowered to challenge traditional norms are more likely to delay marriage or remain unmarried, often viewing these choices as an assertion of their personal independence (Yang & Wu, 2020). This shift indicates a growing divide between the expectations of older generations and the evolving attitudes of younger women, who increasingly prioritize personal fulfillment over traditional marital roles (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Wang, 2021).

### *Career Aspiration and Marriage Decisions*

Career aspirations significantly influence marriage decisions, particularly among highly educated women who prioritize their professional goals over traditional marital expectations

(Tang & Li, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). In contemporary China, women are increasingly focusing on their careers, which has led to a delay in marriage or even a reevaluation of its necessity (Liu et al., 2021). As women attain higher education levels and pursue ambitious careers, they often view marriage as secondary to their personal and professional growth (Zhang & Li, 2022; Xiao & Xu, 2022). This shift reflects broader societal changes in which women are no longer solely defined by their roles within the family but also by their contributions to the workforce.

The relationship between career aspirations and marriage is particularly evident in urban China, where the pursuit of career success has become a priority for many young women (Tang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023). For these women, marriage is often seen as a potential hindrance to career advancement, particularly in a society where traditional gender roles still dominate domestic responsibilities (He & Li, 2020). Research has shown that women who prioritize their careers are more likely to delay marriage, as they perceive that balancing both career and marriage can lead to increased stress and decreased career satisfaction (Liu et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). This perception is particularly strong among women in professions that demand long hours or frequent travel, further complicating the decision to marry.

Studies indicate that women who aspire to high-status careers are less likely to view marriage as a primary life goal, particularly if they feel that marriage may interfere with their professional ambitions (Wang et al., 2021; Zhou & Wang, 2020). Instead, these women tend to focus on their career development, viewing personal success and financial independence as more fulfilling than traditional marital roles (Zhang & Li, 2022; Tang et al., 2023). This shift in priorities has led to a growing number of women in China who are choosing to remain unmarried or delay marriage until they feel secure in their career achievements.

Moreover, the increasing acceptance of non-traditional life paths in urban China has provided women with more opportunities to pursue careers without the pressure to marry (Wang et al., 2021; Xiao & Xu, 2022). The rise of female role models in leadership positions has further encouraged women to prioritize career success, reinforcing the idea that women can achieve professional and personal fulfillment independently of marriage (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). As a result, career aspirations have become a significant factor in shaping women's attitude towards marriage, particularly among those in professional fields where long-term career planning is essential.

#### *Economic Independence and Marriage Attitudes*

Economic independence is another critical factor influencing unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in China. As more women achieve financial stability, their dependence on marriage for economic security has diminished, leading to a reevaluation of the necessity of marriage (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Liu et al., 2021). Historically, marriage was seen as a means for women to secure financial stability, especially in a patriarchal society where women's economic opportunities were limited (Wang et al., 2020). However, with the rise of female workforce participation and financial independence, many women now view marriage as a choice rather than a necessity (Zhou & Zhang, 2023; Ji, 2020).

The relationship between economic independence and marriage decisions has been well-documented in recent literature, particularly in urban China, where women's participation in

the workforce has significantly increased (Fang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Women who are financially independent are more likely to delay marriage or remain unmarried, as they no longer need to rely on a spouse for economic security (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). This shift has allowed women to focus on their personal and professional development without the financial constraints that historically pushed them towards marriage (Tang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023).

Research suggests that economic independence gives women more leverage in marital negotiations, enabling them to seek relationships that align with their personal values rather than conforming to societal expectations (Wang et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). As women gain financial autonomy, they are more likely to prioritize compatibility, mutual respect, and personal happiness over traditional marital roles (Zhou & Zhang, 2023). This empowerment has reshaped the marriage landscape in China, where increasing numbers of financially independent women are choosing to marry later or forgo marriage altogether.

Furthermore, studies show that women who achieve financial independence tend to have more positive attitudes towards remaining single, viewing it as a viable alternative to marriage (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Fang et al., 2021). For these women, economic self-sufficiency provides a sense of control over their life decisions, reducing the pressure to marry for financial security (Wang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). As a result, economic independence has become a key factor in shaping unmarried women's attitude towards marriage, providing them with the freedom to choose their own paths.

#### *Cultural Values and Marriage Perspectives*

Cultural values remain a significant influence on marriage attitudes, particularly in a country like China where traditions are deeply rooted in collectivism and family cohesion (He & Li, 2020; Zhou & Wang, 2021). In traditional Chinese culture, marriage is not only a personal decision but also a familial duty, with individuals expected to marry and contribute to the continuation of the family lineage (Fang et al., 2021). Despite the influence of modernization and individualism, many women in China still grapple with the expectations of their families and communities regarding marriage (Ji, 2020). This tension between traditional cultural values and modern individualistic aspirations continues to shape the attitudes of unmarried women toward marriage.

Research indicates that while many young women in urban China are adopting more individualistic values, they remain influenced by the collectivist ideals of their parents and older generations (Zhang & Li, 2022; Zhou & Wang, 2020). Studies show that cultural values related to family duty and social harmony continue to exert significant pressure on women to marry, even as they pursue personal independence (Liu et al., 2021; Yang & Wu, 2020). This cultural clash creates a complex dynamic in which women must navigate their personal aspirations within the framework of traditional family expectations (He & Li, 2020; Zhou & Zhang, 2023).

Moreover, the rise of individualism in urban China has led to a shift in how women perceive marriage, with many viewing it as a personal choice rather than a societal obligation (Tang & Li, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). This shift has created a divergence between older, more traditional generations and younger women who prioritize personal fulfillment over fulfilling



familial duties (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). As a result, cultural values continue to play a significant role in shaping marriage attitudes, with women balancing traditional beliefs with modern, individualistic goals.

Despite the growing influence of individualism, cultural values rooted in collectivism remain deeply ingrained in many aspects of Chinese society, particularly in rural areas (Zhou & Wang, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). For women in these regions, marriage is still seen as a duty to their families, and failure to marry can lead to social stigma and familial disappointment (Fang et al., 2021; Yang & Wu, 2020). As such, cultural values continue to exert a powerful influence on women's marriage decisions, particularly among those who feel a strong connection to their familial and cultural heritage.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

This study involved a sample of 458 unmarried women from various regions in China. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in age, educational background, socioeconomic status, and urban versus rural residence. The sample size of 458 was determined through power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power for detecting relationships between the independent variables (perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values) and the dependent variable (attitude towards marriage). All participants were fluent in Mandarin and provided informed consent prior to participation in the study.

### *Procedure and Measures*

Participants were recruited through online platforms and community networks. They were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and given the option to withdraw at any time. Data were collected using self-report questionnaires administered through a secure online survey platform. The survey took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.

### *Perceived Social Pressure*

Perceived social pressure was measured using the Subjective Norms Scale based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2020). This scale assesses the extent to which participants perceive pressure from family, peers, and society to get married. The 8-item scale was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater perceived pressure to marry. Sample items include "My family expects me to get married soon" and "Society values women who are married." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.88, indicating good internal consistency.

### *Career Aspiration*

Career aspiration was assessed using the Career Aspiration Scale developed by Gray and O'Brien (2007). This 10-item scale measures the extent to which participants prioritize their career over traditional roles, such as marriage. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating stronger career aspirations. Sample items include "My career success is more important to me than getting married" and "I am focused on achieving my career goals before considering marriage." The scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

### *Economic Independence*

Economic independence was measured using the Financial Self-Efficacy Scale (Lown, 2011). This scale consists of 8 items that evaluate the extent to which participants feel financially independent and capable of making their own decisions regarding marriage. Participants rated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Sample items include “I feel financially secure enough to delay marriage” and “I do not need to rely on marriage for financial stability.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.87, demonstrating good reliability.

### *Cultural Values*

Cultural values were assessed using the Individualism-Collectivism Scale by Triandis (1995), adapted to the context of marriage in Chinese society. This 12-item scale measures participants' orientation towards individualistic versus collectivist values, particularly regarding marriage and family. The scale was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating stronger adherence to collectivist or traditional values. Sample items include “It is important to get married to fulfill family duties” and “Marriage is a personal decision, not a family obligation.” The scale exhibited high internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89.

### *Attitude towards Marriage*

Attitude towards marriage was measured using an adapted version of the Attitude towards marriage Scale by Johnson and Nelson (1990). This 10-item scale evaluates participants' overall perceptions and attitudes towards marriage, including positive and negative feelings. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude toward marriage. Sample items include “Marriage is an important life goal for me” and “I do not feel the need to get married to be happy.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.90, reflecting excellent internal reliability.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the levels of perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, attitude towards marriage. Multiple regression analyses were employed to determine the predictive power of each independent variable on attitude towards marriage. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at  $p < .05$ .

## **Results and Discussion**

The descriptive statistics for perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, cultural values, and attitude towards marriage are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that participants reported moderate to high levels across all variables, reflecting the complex interplay of social, cultural, and individual factors influencing unmarried women’s attitudes towards marriage in China.

Participants reported moderate to high levels of perceived social pressure ( $M = 30.50$ ,  $SD = 6.80$ ), with 60.04% of participants scoring in the high category. The findings suggest that despite modernization and increased individualism in China, societal and familial expectations

regarding marriage remain significant, particularly among women (Liu et al., 2021; Tang & Li, 2020). A substantial portion of women still face pressure from family and society to conform to traditional marital expectations, which aligns with previous studies on social norms in collectivist cultures (He & Li, 2020; Ajzen, 2020). The high levels of perceived social pressure are consistent with research emphasizing the role of subjective norms in shaping marital attitudes, especially in societies where family cohesion is highly valued (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Fang et al., 2021).

The results show that the participants exhibited moderate to high levels of career aspiration ( $M = 38.40$ ,  $SD = 7.10$ ), with 64.85% of participants scoring in the high category. This indicates that a large portion of unmarried women prioritize career success over traditional marriage expectations (Tang & Li, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). These findings are consistent with research showing that women who aspire to professional success often view marriage as secondary to their career goals, leading to delayed or reconsidered decisions about marriage (Zhou & Zhang, 2023; Liu et al., 2021). This high level of career aspiration supports studies suggesting that as women become more educated and career-focused, marriage becomes less of a priority (Chen et al., 2023; Zhang & Li, 2022).

Economic independence was reported at moderate to high levels among the participants ( $M = 35.90$ ,  $SD = 6.20$ ), with 62.45% scoring in the high category. This reflects the growing trend of women achieving financial self-sufficiency, which allows them to make autonomous life choices, including whether or not to marry (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). These findings support previous research indicating that financially independent women are less reliant on marriage for security and are more likely to delay marriage (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). The empowerment that comes with economic independence has reshaped attitudes towards marriage, providing women with the freedom to prioritize personal and professional goals over traditional marital roles (Tang et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021).

The results indicate that participants reported moderate adherence to traditional cultural values regarding marriage ( $M = 32.10$ ,  $SD = 5.50$ ), with 56.30% of participants scoring in the moderate to high category. Despite the influence of modernization, many unmarried women in China still hold traditional views about the importance of marriage and family (Zhou & Wang, 2020; He & Li, 2020). This aligns with studies that show the persistence of collectivist cultural values, even as individualism gains ground in urban areas (Fang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). The findings suggest that while women may adopt more individualistic attitudes in terms of career and independence, traditional family values continue to exert significant influence on their marriage decisions (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Yang & Wu, 2020).

Finally, participants reported moderate to positive attitudes towards marriage ( $M = 33.80$ ,  $SD = 6.00$ ), with 58.55% of respondents expressing a favorable attitude towards marriage. This suggests that despite the rising influence of individualism and career aspirations, marriage still holds significance for many unmarried women in China (Zhang & Li, 2022; Liu et al., 2021). The findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the complex relationship between modern aspirations and traditional cultural values, with many women negotiating between personal independence and societal expectations (Tang et al., 2020; He & Li, 2020). These results suggest that while unmarried women may delay marriage due to personal and



professional factors, they have not completely rejected the institution of marriage (Zhou & Zhang, 2023; Wang et al., 2021).

Table 1

*Levels of Perceived Social Pressure, Career Aspiration, Economic Independence, Cultural Values, and Attitude towards marriage*

| Level                            | n   | %     | Mean  | SD   |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| <u>Perceived Social Pressure</u> |     |       | 30.50 | 6.80 |
| Low                              | 70  | 15.28 |       |      |
| Moderate                         | 113 | 24.67 |       |      |
| High                             | 275 | 60.04 |       |      |
| <u>Career Aspiration</u>         |     |       | 33.80 | 7.10 |
| Low                              | 64  | 13.97 |       |      |
| Moderate                         | 97  | 21.18 |       |      |
| High                             | 297 | 64.85 |       |      |
| <u>Economic Independence</u>     |     |       | 35.90 | 6.20 |
| Low                              | 70  | 15.28 |       |      |
| Moderate                         | 102 | 22.27 |       |      |
| High                             | 286 | 62.45 |       |      |
| <u>Cultural Values</u>           |     |       |       |      |
| Low                              | 90  | 19.65 | 32.10 | 5.50 |
| Medium                           | 110 | 24.02 |       |      |
| High                             | 258 | 56.30 |       |      |
| <u>Attitude towards marriage</u> |     |       |       |      |
| Low                              | 84  | 18.34 | 33.80 | 6.00 |
| Medium                           | 106 | 23.10 |       |      |
| High                             | 268 | 58.55 |       |      |

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, cultural values, and attitudes towards marriage among unmarried women in China (see Table 2). The results

revealed that all independent variables were significantly correlated with attitudes towards marriage, indicating that perceived social pressure, career aspirations, economic independence, and cultural values are strongly associated with women's marriage attitudes.

The strongest correlation was observed between perceived social pressure and attitude towards marriage ( $r = .72, p < .001$ ). This suggests that higher levels of social pressure from family and society are strongly linked to a more traditional and positive attitude towards marriage. These findings align with previous studies demonstrating that social norms and expectations play a significant role in shaping women's marital decisions, particularly in collectivist cultures like China (Ajzen, 2020; He & Li, 2020). Women who face higher levels of social pressure tend to conform to societal expectations about marriage, which influences their attitudes (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Fang et al., 2021).

Career aspiration showed a significant negative correlation with attitude towards marriage ( $r = -.64, p < .001$ ), suggesting that women who prioritize their careers tend to hold less traditional and less positive attitude towards marriage. This supports existing literature, which shows that women who are career-oriented often view marriage as a potential hindrance to their professional success and personal goals (Tang & Li, 2020; Zhang & Li, 2022). As women increasingly pursue higher education and career opportunities, marriage becomes less of a priority, reflecting a shift in values among modern Chinese women (Liu et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023).

Economic independence was also negatively correlated with attitude towards marriage ( $r = -.61, p < .001$ ). This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that financially independent women are less likely to view marriage as a necessity, as they no longer rely on marriage for economic stability (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). Women who achieve economic independence tend to have more autonomy in their life choices, including the decision to delay or forgo marriage (Wang et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Economic independence empowers women to focus on their personal and professional development rather than conforming to traditional marital expectations (Fang et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2023).

Finally, cultural values showed a positive correlation with attitude towards marriage ( $r = .58, p < .001$ ), indicating that women who hold stronger traditional or collectivist values are more likely to have a positive attitude toward marriage. These results align with existing research on the role of cultural values in shaping attitudes towards marriage, particularly in societies where family and marriage are highly valued (Zhou & Wang, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Women who adhere to collectivist values are more likely to prioritize marriage as a key component of family and societal harmony, reflecting the influence of traditional cultural norms (Yang & Wu, 2020; He & Li, 2020).

Overall, the correlation results indicate that perceived social pressure has the strongest influence on attitudes towards marriage, followed by career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values. These findings highlight the complex interaction of social, individual, and cultural factors that shape women's attitude towards marriage in contemporary China. Women who face high levels of social pressure are more likely to

conform to traditional marital expectations, while those with strong career aspirations and financial independence tend to challenge these norms, reflecting broader societal changes.

Table 2

*Correlations Between Perceived Social Pressure, Career Aspiration, Economic Independence, Cultural Values, and Attitude towards marriage*

| Variable                  | Attitude towards marriage |          |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
|                           | <i>r</i>                  | <i>p</i> |
| Perceived Social Pressure | .72**                     | .001     |
| Career Aspiration         | -.64**                    | .001     |
| Economic Independence     | -.61**                    | .001     |
| Cultural Values           | .58**                     | .001     |

N = 458, \*\*  $p < .001$

A multiple regression analysis (see Table 3) was conducted to examine the predictive relationships between perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, cultural values, and attitude towards marriage among unmarried women in China. The overall regression model was significant;  $F(4, 453) = 153.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the four independent variables significantly predicted attitudes towards marriage. The model explained a substantial portion of the variance in attitudes towards marriage ( $R^2 = 0.684$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.680$ ).

Among the predictors, perceived social pressure emerged as the strongest predictor of attitude towards marriage ( $\beta = 0.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding is consistent with existing literature that highlights the significant role of social norms and familial expectations in shaping women's decisions about marriage, particularly in collectivist cultures (Ajzen, 2020; He & Li, 2020). Women who experience higher levels of social pressure tend to hold more traditional views on marriage, conforming to societal expectations about this life event (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Fang et al., 2021).

Career aspiration demonstrated a significant negative effect on attitude towards marriage ( $\beta = -0.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that women who prioritize their careers tend to have less traditional attitudes towards marriage. This result aligns with prior studies showing that as women pursue higher education and professional success, marriage becomes a lower priority (Tang & Li, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Career-oriented women are more likely to delay or reconsider marriage, perceiving it as potentially interfering with their professional goals (Zhang & Li, 2022; Chen et al., 2023).

Economic independence was also a significant negative predictor of attitude towards marriage ( $\beta = -0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding supports previous research showing that women who are financially independent are less likely to view marriage as a necessity, as they do not rely on marriage for financial stability (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). Economic independence provides women with greater autonomy in making life choices, reducing the traditional pressures to marry for economic security (Fang et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2023).

Lastly, cultural values showed a significant positive relationship with attitude towards marriage ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that women who hold stronger traditional values are

more likely to have positive attitude towards marriage. This aligns with research showing that adherence to collectivist cultural values continues to influence women's attitudes, particularly in societies where family and societal expectations are deeply embedded (Zhou & Wang, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Women who prioritize family cohesion and social harmony are more likely to conform to traditional marriage expectations (Yang & Wu, 2020; He & Li, 2020).

These results suggest that perceived social pressure is the most influential factor in shaping unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in China, followed by career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values. The findings reflect the complex interplay of individual, social, and cultural factors influencing modern women's perspectives on marriage, with social pressure continuing to play a dominant role in a society transitioning between traditional and modern values.

Table 3

*Regression Analysis for Perceived Social Pressure, Career Aspiration, Economic Independence, and Cultural Values on Attitude towards marriage*

| Variable                         | Attitude towards marriage |       |               |      |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------------|------|
|                                  | B                         | SE. B | Beta, $\beta$ | p    |
| Psychological Readiness          | .56                       | .08   | 0.50          | .001 |
| Perceived Organizational Support | -.44                      | .09   | -.41          | .001 |
| Change Communication Quality     | -.42                      | .08   | -.38          | .001 |
| Perceived Job Security           | .39                       | .07   | .35           | .001 |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>             | .684                      |       |               |      |
| <b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>    | .680                      |       |               |      |
| <b>F</b>                         | 153.45                    |       |               |      |

$R^2 = 0.684$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.680$ ,  $F = 153.45$  ( $p < .001$ )

The regression analysis confirms that perceived social pressure is the most influential factor predicting unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in China. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the impact of societal and familial expectations on women's marriage decisions in collectivist cultures (Ajzen, 2020; He & Li, 2020). Social norms continue to exert strong influence, leading women to adopt more traditional views about marriage, particularly when pressured by their families and social circles (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Fang et al., 2021).

Career aspiration also significantly predicted attitude towards marriage, with career-oriented women demonstrating less traditional views on marriage (Tang & Li, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). The negative relationship between career aspirations and attitude towards marriage supports the idea that professional goals often take precedence over marriage for highly educated women, leading them to delay or forgo marriage to pursue career success (Zhang & Li, 2022; Chen et al., 2023).

The negative relationship between economic independence and attitudes towards marriage further reinforces the idea that financially independent women are less likely to view marriage as a necessity (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). Financial self-sufficiency enables women to make autonomous decisions regarding their life paths, reducing their

reliance on marriage for economic security. This aligns with prior research showing that as women gain more financial freedom, they are more likely to delay or opt out of marriage, choosing instead to focus on personal and professional fulfillment (Fang et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2023).

Cultural values also significantly predicted attitudes towards marriage, suggesting that women who hold more traditional, collectivist values are more likely to have positive attitude towards marriage (Zhou & Wang, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). This finding underscores the importance of cultural context in shaping attitude towards marriage, as women who prioritize family cohesion and societal harmony are more inclined to view marriage favorably (Yang & Wu, 2020; He & Li, 2020). Despite modernization and increasing individualism in urban areas, traditional values still play a significant role in shaping marriage attitudes for many women in China.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the complex interplay of social, individual, and cultural factors that influence unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in China. Perceived social pressure emerged as the most significant predictor, reflecting the continued influence of societal expectations. However, career aspiration and economic independence provide women with greater autonomy, leading them to challenge traditional norms around marriage. Cultural values, while still significant, indicate that traditional views persist alongside modern aspirations. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how changing societal dynamics, individual achievements, and cultural values impact marriage decisions in contemporary China.

#### *Shaping Attitude towards Marriage: Policy, Social Pressures, and Cultural Dynamics in Contemporary China*

The findings from this study offer important insights into the factors shaping attitude towards marriage among unmarried women in China. Perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values all significantly influenced women's attitude towards marriage, suggesting that these factors should be a focus for policymakers and social institutions when addressing marriage trends and gender roles in contemporary Chinese society.

Perceived social pressure emerged as the strongest predictor of attitude towards marriage, indicating that societal and familial expectations play a dominant role in shaping how women perceive marriage. This suggests that social policies aimed at reducing the pressure placed on women to marry, particularly those who are career-oriented or financially independent, could lead to a more balanced approach to marriage and personal choice. For instance, campaigns promoting the idea that marriage is a personal decision rather than a societal obligation could help alleviate the stress and anxiety associated with marriage expectations (Ajzen, 2020; Zhou & Wang, 2021). Additionally, educational programs emphasizing personal autonomy and diverse life pathways could encourage young women to prioritize their personal and professional aspirations without feeling constrained by traditional marital expectations (He & Li, 2020).

Career aspiration also significantly predicted attitude towards marriage, showing that women who prioritize their careers tend to have less traditional views on marriage. This has



implications for workplace policies and societal attitudes. Companies and policymakers should promote work-life balance initiatives that enable women to pursue career goals without the pressure of having to choose between professional success and marriage (Tang & Li, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Specific initiatives could include subsidized vocational training to enhance skills, mentorship programs that connect women with role models in their fields, and flexible working arrangements that accommodate family planning. Additionally, access to affordable childcare services could empower women to manage both career and family responsibilities more effectively, thus alleviating the perceived conflict between the two.

Economic independence was another significant predictor of attitude towards marriage, with financially independent women being less inclined to view marriage as necessary for financial security. This underscores the need for economic policies that support women's financial autonomy. By providing better access to education, entrepreneurial opportunities, and financial planning resources, governments can help women feel empowered to make independent life decisions, including the choice of whether or not to marry (Xiao & Xu, 2022; Zhou & Zhang, 2023). In practical terms, this might involve initiatives like low-interest loans for women entrepreneurs, grants for educational pursuits, and financial literacy workshops that equip women with the skills to manage their finances independently. Such measures would enhance women's economic independence and contribute to gender equality by reducing the traditional reliance on marriage for economic stability.

Lastly, cultural values play an important role in shaping marriage attitudes, with women who adhere to traditional collectivist values more likely to view marriage positively. This suggests that cultural change is gradual and that, despite modernization, traditional family and societal expectations still hold strong in China. Policymakers and educators should engage with these cultural values by promoting open discussions about evolving gender roles, marriage, and personal autonomy. Encouraging respect for diverse perspectives on marriage while still honoring cultural traditions will be key to navigating this balance in Chinese society (Fang et al., 2021; Yang & Wu, 2020).

#### *Practical Applications for Policymakers and Social Institutions*

These findings have practical implications for policymakers and social institutions seeking to influence marriage trends and attitudes in China. By addressing the pressures placed on women to marry and supporting alternative life paths, policymakers can help women make decisions about marriage based on personal choice rather than societal obligation. Initiatives that promote economic independence, career development, and respect for personal autonomy could reduce the traditional pressures surrounding marriage.

Workplace and social policies should focus on supporting women's career aspirations while providing the flexibility for those who also wish to pursue marriage and family. Ensuring that women have access to financial and professional resources can empower them to make decisions that align with their personal values and goals. Additionally, campaigns that emphasize marriage as a choice rather than a necessity could reshape societal attitudes toward unmarried women, reducing the stigma associated with delaying or forgoing marriage.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Although this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing attitude towards marriage among unmarried women in China, several limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the independent variables and marriage attitudes. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track how women's attitude towards marriage evolve over time and how these are influenced by changing social, economic, and cultural conditions (He & Li, 2020; Ajzen, 2020).

Second, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may introduce biases such as social desirability. Future studies should consider using mixed-method approaches, such as interviews and focus groups, to gain deeper insights into women's attitude towards marriage. This would allow researchers to explore the nuanced ways in which women perceive societal pressure, career aspirations, and economic independence in relation to marriage (Zhou & Wang, 2021; Xiao & Xu, 2022).

Finally, this study focused on unmarried women in China, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. Future research should explore how similar factors influence marriage attitudes in different countries or among married women. Comparative studies between urban and rural populations or across different cultural settings could further enrich our understanding of the global and cultural dimensions of marriage attitudes (Fang et al., 2021; Zhou & Zhang, 2023).

**Conclusion**

This study highlights the significant roles of perceived social pressure, career aspiration, economic independence, and cultural values in shaping unmarried women's attitude towards marriage in China. Perceived social pressure was the strongest predictor, emphasizing the impact of societal and familial expectations on marriage decisions. Career aspiration and economic independence also play crucial roles, with career-oriented and financially independent women being less likely to view marriage as a priority. Finally, cultural values continue to influence women's views on marriage, particularly in a society transitioning between traditional and modern values.

The findings have important implications for policymakers and social institutions aiming to foster personal autonomy and reduce societal pressure on marriage. By promoting financial independence, career development, and respect for diverse life choices, policymakers can support women in making informed decisions about marriage based on personal values rather than social expectations. Future research should explore these relationships in different cultural contexts and over time to further understand the complex dynamics that shape attitude towards marriage.

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