



THE BRIDAL SHOWER CELEBRATION AS A PRE-WEDDING RITES OF PASSAGE AMONG MILLENNIALS (GENERATION Y) AND GENERATION Z IN INDONESIA

Irma Yunita

¹Department of Anthropology, Gajah Mada University, Indonesia

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✉ email:
irmayunita010300@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The process of celebrating the transition from singlehood to marriage has undergone significant changes and developments, particularly among Generation Y and Generation Z, who currently represent the most active demographic group entering marriage. One prominent cultural trend among these generations is the “bridal shower,” a pre-wedding event specially arranged by the bride-to-be’s closest friends. This gathering serves as a symbolic farewell to single life before the wedding ceremony. Based on findings from this literature-based study, several underlying factors influence the organization of bridal showers. Chief among them is the expression of gratitude for deep and enduring friendships that have lasted through various life stages and now culminate in a new chapter—marriage. For Gen Y and Gen Z, the bridal shower is perceived as a joyful and memorable gathering with close friends, an opportunity to spend quality time together, to give and receive advice from married friends, and to exchange farewell messages before entering married life.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred milestone anticipated by nearly every individual. In preparation for marriage, prospective brides and grooms typically undergo a series of rituals and transitional processes. One increasingly normalized cultural practice among Indonesian Millennials and Generation Z during this transition is the celebration of a bridal shower. This event, held shortly before the wedding day, serves as a symbolic farewell to singlehood. In recent years, Millennials and Gen Z have become the demographic groups most frequently engaging in bridal shower celebrations. The bridal shower is characterized by distinct symbols and rituals that hold particular meaning for both the bride-to-be and her closest friends who attend the event. Typically organized by the bride's inner circle, the bridal shower becomes a rare opportunity for gathering, especially when their individual responsibilities have previously made such meetings difficult. As such, the event is seen as an important and intentional moment to reconnect. Today, the bridal shower has evolved into a generational ritual for Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z to celebrate the transition into married life. A significant factor supporting the widespread adoption of this practice is the strong presence of digital connectivity, particularly through the Internet. As Severin and Tankard (2005) suggest, the Internet has become a central medium through which people remain informed about global trends, seek entertainment, enjoy leisure, escape daily stressors, alleviate loneliness, and spend quality time with friends and family. This digital integration has further influenced the spread and popularity of bridal showers as a modern cultural expression among the younger generations.

Several previous studies have examined the phenomenon of bridal showers from various perspectives. Mely Eka Karina (2021), for instance, focused on the symbolic communication embedded within bridal shower events as part of the broader pre-wedding ceremony. Her research draws on Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interaction Theory, emphasizing how meaning is constructed through actions involving symbols in social interaction, and how these meanings become fully realized in the course of those interactions. Another study by Irene Santika Vidiadari and Rebekka Rismayanti (2022) analyzed bridal showers as a newly emerging ritual in modern society, particularly in Yogyakarta. They argued that the bridal shower,

originally adopted from foreign cultural practices, has undergone a shift in meaning. Traditionally seen as a gathering for sharing household gifts with the bride-to-be, the event has now evolved into a platform for expressing friendship and showcasing social presence, particularly on social media. Moreover, bridal showers are increasingly being organized by professional event planners, offering a variety of price packages and decorative themes. This trend reflects not only a transformation in the event's meaning but also the formation of social stratification within bridal shower practices. Participation in such events is no longer limited to personal or symbolic significance; it has also become a trend leveraged to display one's social identity through curated posts on digital platforms during or after the celebration.

The bridal shower, as a pre-wedding celebration held with close friends and relatives, has significantly influenced the tendency among Millennial and Generation Z women to consider this event an essential part of their wedding preparation. For these generations, the bridal shower has become not only a social gathering but also a meaningful ritual, increasingly regarded as a necessary tradition prior to marriage. Its growing popularity reflects a broader cultural shift in which the bridal shower has become a generational marker for Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia. Based on this phenomenon, the present study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the underlying factors that motivate Millennial and Generation Z women to organize and participate in bridal shower rituals? and (2) How do Millennial and Generation Z women in Indonesia interpret the symbols and rituals embedded in the bridal shower during its implementation?

This study is grounded in the argument that bridal showers, as pre-wedding rituals marking the transition from singlehood, are not merely social gatherings or generational trends among Millennials and Generation Z. Rather, these events are imbued with symbolic and ritualistic elements that hold deeper meaning for the bride-to-be and her closest companions. The individuals present at these celebrations are not random attendees, but rather special people with whom the bride shares a strong emotional bond. Thus, the bridal shower serves as a space for

affirming these connections, expressing affection, and commemorating the transition into a new life stage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Bridal shower

The bridal shower is a pre-wedding cultural tradition that initially emerged in Western Europe during the 16th century (Montemurro, 2005:7). Typically, this celebration is designed and organized by the bride-to-be's closest friends to offer emotional support as she prepares to enter married life. This practice is closely linked to cultural understandings that function as a dimension of social activity—providing what Lee (2006:71) describes as a "structure of feeling." This concept refers to a shared emotional framework that enables mutual understanding among individuals and fosters a sense of collective experience, often intangible but deeply felt. As part of this cultural structure, the bridal shower enables both the bride-to-be and her closest companions to share a common meaning and set of values associated with the event (Vidiadari, 2022).

The bridal shower, as a pre-wedding celebration marking the bride-to-be's transition from singlehood to married life, is typically organized by her closest friends. This event usually involves giving gifts to the bride, such as money, electronic appliances, household items, and other goods that may be useful after marriage. This ritual is closely related to expressions of friendship and kinship networks, particularly among women during the status transition phase (Montemurro, 2002:83). The celebration is based on loyalty or the sense of duty among close friends or relatives, serving as an expression of solidarity and strong social bonds. Additionally, according to Finol (1994:88), bridal showers can also be seen as a form of gender equality for women (Astina, 2020). This is made possible because the bridal shower provides a space for women to empower and encourage each other.

2.2 Rite of passage

The term "rite," derived from the Latin word for religious practices, ceremonies, customs, and habits, refers to the formalized rituals performed in

specific contexts. According to Victor Turner (as cited in Danel, 2015), rites have the power to overcome divisions and build social solidarity. Rites unite opposing principles, allowing individuals to gain new strength and motivation for life within their everyday social environments. The organization of certain rituals or ceremonies, conducted by an individual with their group, stems from the awareness that each stage of life introduces individuals into new and broader social environments (Haryono, 2012). Furthermore, according to Durkheim (as cited in Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text*), ritual is an effort by a social group to reaffirm its life periodically or continuously. Durkheim argues that certain rituals serve as a force for social groups to reaffirm themselves, leading to "delirium" or what he calls "collective effervescence." Durkheim also views rituals not always as generating sacred ideas, but as a medium through which social facts, especially existing notions about clans and their associated symbols, are reaffirmed and endowed with authority in the individual consciousness, representing a collective awareness.

Rituals, in this context, are also discussed by Van Gennep in his book *Rites de Passage* (1908), concerning the study of rites and transitional ceremonies in *Pengantar Antropologi* (2012) by Tri Joko Sri Haryono. Van Gennep asserts that universally, rituals and religious ceremonies serve the function of revitalizing social spirit within communities. This is because there are times when the social vitality of a community diminishes, leading to stagnation or crisis within society. Human life undergoes biological changes as well as shifts in its socio-cultural environment, which can affect the psyche and lead to a mental crisis. This also calls for the regeneration of social vitality. Van Gennep also views transitional rites as markers of change or transitions in place, state, social status, and age (Sari, 2016). This is relevant to the bridal shower ritual, which signifies the transition of an individual from singlehood to becoming a wife, assuming the responsibility of forming and maintaining a household.

2.3 Symbolic concept

Clifford Geertz, in his analysis of *Culture and Religion* (Kanisius, 1992), states that symbols are objects or events that point to something. Humans and culture are

inseparable, thus humans are referred to as cultural beings. Culture itself consists of ideas, symbols, and values as products of human actions and creations, giving rise to the expression, "The relationship between humans and culture is so intertwined with symbols because humans think, feel, and behave through symbolic expressions."

Furthermore, Ernst Cassirer, in *The Power of Symbols* (Kanisius, 2002), mentions through his entire interpretation of culture, that human beings are "animal symbolicum." By using symbols, humans can achieve their highest potential and life goals, meaning that humans express themselves through signs or symbols, articulating everything within themselves and everything around them as expressions of their identity. Cassirer further asserts that symbolic representation is the primary function of human consciousness and the foundation for understanding all of human life. In his study, Cassirer reflects on various cultural aspects present in humanity, such as language, art, history, religion, and science, which are seen as parts of the "symbolic universe."

2.4 Millennials 'Y' and Generation Z 'Z'

Millennial generation, also known as Generation Y, according to the view expressed by Howe and Strauss in (Putra, 2016), refers to those born between 1981 and 1995, making this generation one that is now in its productive years. Generation Y is more commonly referred to as the millennial generation, and they are more dominant in using and leveraging instant communication technologies such as email, SMS, instant messaging, and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which began to emerge during the internet boom (Lyons, 2004). The millennial generation serves as the "bridge" to the future of a diverse nation. This generation has a significant impact on various important dynamics, influencing markets such as housing, education institutions, social structures, culture, and more. Generation Y is the first to fully embrace social media; they are highly social but also relatively liberal, distancing themselves from traditional institutions such as the government, political parties, and community organizations. Despite this, Generation Y still tends to idealize the pre-internet era, especially aspects like

cinemas, films, and other elements from the 1990s, which are considered highly attractive to them (Christiani & Ikasari, 2020).

Generation Z refers to those born between 1995 and 2010, and is typically characterized as innovative, up-to-date, and possessing high levels of determination and resilience. A significant number of Generation Z tend to pursue careers as entrepreneurs. Their keen sensitivity to rapidly advancing technology has contributed to their faster and more open thinking patterns. Generation Z is considered to be a generation full of aspirations but also highly solution-oriented in addressing conflicts around them. This generation appears to exhibit extraordinary courage due to their awareness of technological developments and their extensive knowledge of global issues. However, some members of Generation Z may also show tendencies toward a lack of commitment, short-term thinking, and practicality, with a preference for avoiding complications (Indra, 2018). Generation Z is the future generation, and according to Blakley (in Fromm, 2017), it is the most diverse and unique generation, distinct from the millennial generation. For Generation Z, the internet era has transformed their media consumption habits. Technology has significantly altered their social interaction patterns and reshaped many of their ideas about the environment they live in. Generation Z is more willing to challenge traditional thinking patterns and reinterpret them into new values (Adam in Khasali, 2017). Having been born into a world that is already highly familiar with technology, this generation has developed a more global character compared to previous generations. Therefore, when observing their character traits and values, Generation Z is inclined toward being “against traditional directions” (Christiani & Ikasari, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted by the author due to the growing trend of bridal shower celebrations among Generation Y and Generation Z prior to their wedding day. The tradition of celebrating the transition from single life, which was previously limited to home-based ceremonies following regional cultural customs, has now evolved with the introduction of bridal showers in Indonesia. This trend has been further fueled by the increasing number of public figures who host bridal showers

before their weddings. As a result, their followers and social media users, who observe their activities, have developed a strong desire to partake in similar celebrations, seeking to showcase their own existence both in public and on social media. This trend has, in some regions, displaced the traditional "pingit" practice, which held that a bride-to-be should remain at home and follow a series of traditional customs before her wedding. The arrival of bridal showers has introduced a new way of celebrating single life, aligning with customs originating outside Indonesia. However, despite this shift, the author observes that there are still rituals and symbols within the bridal shower that can be interpreted functionally by the Generation Y and Generation Z participants who celebrate them.

The method used in writing this article is a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing a literature study approach aimed at obtaining a comprehensive understanding and in-depth references regarding the phenomenon discussed in this paper, specifically related to Generation Y and Generation Z who celebrate bridal showers as part of their pre-wedding single-life farewell. The data sources for this literature study include books, electronic books, journal articles, media coverage, and various other electronic sources. The data analysis technique used in this research is the interactive analysis technique by Miles and Huberman (1992), or the interactive model.

This analysis technique is carried out through three performance components, namely: (1) Data reduction, which is a process of organizing data in a more structured way through selection, focusing on simplification, and abstraction of existing data; (2) Data presentation, which involves grouping data into categories or groups classified based on core themes; (3) Data verification, in this stage, conclusions are drawn based on various results from data that emerge from different sources that have been analyzed. From these three components, the data analysis conducted in the study provides results related to the discussions on bridal showers, as well as anything related to the rituals and symbols involved in the single-life farewell process of the bridal shower event.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Bridal shower celebration practices in Indonesia

Based on the analysis of findings through a literature study conducted from various data sources, it was found that bridal showers have become a trend in Indonesia since 2015 and continue to this day. This trend has spread easily to various regions of Indonesia, particularly in large cities with high population numbers. However, this phenomenon is closely related to the generation entering the marriage phase in the present era, namely Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1995, and Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010. This trend is, of course, closely tied to information technology, with which both generations are very familiar and difficult to separate. Especially with the rapid spread of information via the Internet and social media platforms such as Instagram, among others. In this regard, Astina (2020) discusses the practice of bridal showers, stating that:

"Various reasons underlie the practice of bridal showers, including group awareness, as a way to 'release' a friend who is getting married, offering group support, following trends, and as a form of reciprocity among groups. The stages of the bridal shower celebration consist of five phases: it begins with welcoming the bridesmaids, accompanied by a surprise; then, an attribute is placed on the bride-to-be, such as a crown to highlight her special status, and a sash for writing humorous messages, usually related to the transition of status and sexuality; followed by games involving challenging questions; then, the bridesmaids deliver messages and impressions to the bride-to-be; and finally, the event ends with a shared meal while reminiscing with the group."

The bride-to-be is often dressed in a flamboyant and gaudy fashion, adorned with accessories that have been planned, such as wearing a sash, shawl, and crown, as well as other items, and then paraded around the venue where the event takes place. In addition, there is a session where the bridesmaids ask the bride-to-be questions about her fiancé and answer additional questions posed among themselves. After the series of events, there is also a session where the results of the bridal shower are shared on social media together. Therefore, Astina also states:

"The bride-to-be, who receives a bridal shower celebration from her group of friends, uploads images and videos on social media as a form of appreciation for the group that organized the bridal shower. For both the bridesmaids and the bride-to-be, posting photos and videos serves as an opportunity to showcase the existence of their friendship or social group and to display social status, as this celebration often involves a significant financial cost."

This indicates that those who organize bridal showers want to showcase the existence of their friendship group in both public spaces and the virtual realm of

social media. Regarding bridal shower invitations in Indonesia, they often do not require formal invitations because the bride-to-be's friends or the guests themselves organize the event. However, some brides-to-be also plan the event according to their own preferences, using the occasion to distribute matching outfits to the bridesmaids for the wedding day. The bridal shower celebration, which is held with close friends who will later become the bridesmaids, is often hosted at hotels, restaurants, or other venues according to their desires. It is also common for the bride-to-be's close friends to hire an Event Organizer to decorate and prepare the attributes for the bridal shower, with the hope that the event will be more "Instagrammable" than usual.

Based on the findings of this literature study, it was discovered that the bridal shower is conducted as an expression of gratitude, not only because of enduring friendships but also as a way to mark and embrace a new life stage—the upcoming marriage. Additionally, the bridal shower is seen as a special occasion to reunite with friends, often difficult to gather due to their busy schedules. There are also factors that contribute to the bridal shower trend among Generation Y and Generation Z in Indonesia, namely those who learn about bridal showers through social media, whether it's from the accounts of their favorite celebrities, influencers, or random posts on Instagram's FYP (For You Page) featuring videos or photos. Furthermore, the bridal shower celebration was showcased in the movie *Bride Wars* (2009), which inspired many fans of the event. Additionally, the practice of bridal showers has become a new cultural tradition among groups of women in specific places, such as in workplaces, college friends, or close friends from various communities. Once this practice was adopted by close friends, the acceptance of this trend became more flexible as other friends frequently celebrated it. In this process, both the bride-to-be and her close friends in the bridal shower observe how others respond to the event (Bandura, in Griffin, 2006).

4.2 The meaning of symbols and rituals contained in the Bridal shower procession

In its development, the bridal shower has gained its own meaning in its implementation, which was later discussed by Mely (2021):

"Through the celebration of the bridal shower event, the current generation has interacted with one another, leading to interpretations of the meanings embedded in the event. With the sequence of activities and various stages, the event becomes increasingly exciting. For example, the phase of determining the theme and decorations according to the desired concept, which reflects luxury and beauty, as well as the accessories worn by the bride-to-be, are clearly used to signify who the bride-to-be is during the bridal shower. The act of placing the flower or gemstone crown symbolizes the transition of the bride-to-be's status and also highlights her as the queen of the bridal shower event."

This was followed by:

"Throughout the sequence of events, it becomes an exciting experience and creates memorable moments that also help the bride-to-be feel a bit more relaxed before the wedding day. The theme and the bridal shower celebration convey meanings of close friendship, love, and affection. This becomes an unforgettable and meaningful moment."

In terms of the meaning behind the bridal shower celebration, which is designed to mark the farewell of a close female friend's single life, this event is seen as a fun and memorable gathering. It is expected to be the last unforgettable moment before bidding farewell to singlehood. The focus of the bridal shower is on spending time with close friends, having conversations, receiving advice from friends who are already married, and getting farewell messages or life guidance. The bridal shower serves as a way for the friendship group to offer support, acknowledging the transition in status and new responsibilities that the bride-to-be will soon embrace, which often creates fears for the bride-to-be. Thus, the bridal shower becomes a rite of passage during a period of crisis, helping the bride-to-be relieve stress during the intense wedding preparation phase.

The bridal shower ritual has become a reference for Generation Y and Generation Z in the farewell-to-singlehood process before marriage. However, this practice does not carry a specific sacred meaning because it is not part of a traditional ritual involving both families of the bride and groom, nor is it a tradition rooted in Indonesia's local cultural wisdom. The main point in understanding the bridal shower is about how the event is organized, where the ritual takes place, and with whom the event is commemorated. These factors then provide various special values for the bride-to-be and the friends who celebrate the bridal shower.

4.3 Symbolic search on the documentation of the implementation of the bridal shower procession



Source: The above documentation is sourced from various results traced through data sources and Google and Internet Searching engines.

From the documentation above, it can be concluded that the symbolic meanings highlighted in the bridal shower event predominantly feature the colors

white and pink, which, in their interpretation, symbolize sincerity, honesty, and friendship. This is related to the opinion expressed by Mariam L. David, who stated that the color white is associated with purity, love, chastity, sincerity, and hope. According to color psychology, white symbolizes sincerity and honesty, as does pink, which represents affection, harmony, family, and friendship, as seen in the surprise party directed at the bride-to-be and her group (Ola, 2021).

The results of this study show that various factors have influenced Generation Y and Generation Z, both those who are getting married and their close friends, in organizing bridal showers. These factors include expressing gratitude for their close friendship and marking the transition to a new phase of life—the upcoming marriage. Furthermore, the bridal shower celebration is inspired by public figures on social media, such as their favorite celebrity accounts, influencers, and videos or photos from the Instagram FYP (For You Page), as well as from the movie *Bride Wars*. Additionally, bridal showers have become a trend or new cultural tradition among groups of women in certain places, often held periodically for those about to marry, whether in the workplace, college settings, or among close friends united by a specific community. These groups then showcase the existence of their friendship in both public spaces and the virtual realm of social media.

In terms of the meaning behind the bridal shower process, this event serves as a fun and memorable gathering with close friends before bidding farewell to singlehood. It also focuses on making the most of the time spent chatting, receiving advice, and hearing words of wisdom from friends who have already married, as well as receiving farewell messages. Additionally, this celebration is used as an effort to provide support from the friendship group to the bride-to-be, as she faces the transition in status and the new responsibilities she will soon take on. It is hoped that this will help alleviate stress during the intense wedding preparation phase.

The bridal shower, which has become a trend for Generation Y and Generation Z, is not considered a sacred event because it is not part of a traditional ritual involving both families of the bride and groom. Moreover, this culture is not rooted in Indonesia's local traditions and cultural wisdom. However, this event becomes meaningful and memorable based on how the process is organized, where it takes

place, and with whom it is commemorated. These aspects provide various special values for the bride-to-be and the friends who celebrate the bridal shower.

This research was conducted through the lens of analyzing the massive, emerging phenomenon among Generation Y and Generation Z in Indonesia, which differs from previous studies that did not focus on Gen Y & Gen Z. The actions that can be taken from the results of this study are to give specific meaning to each stage of the bridal shower event, which can foster strong bonding between the bride-to-be and her close friends who participate in the celebration. Furthermore, Generation Y and Generation Z are able to appreciate the value of having their closest friends by their side during the transition phase, marking the rite of passage from singlehood to marriage.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding in this study shows that Generation Y and Generation Z perceive new things through media inspiration and information technology, which enables them to showcase the existence of their friendship group in both public spaces and the virtual world of social media. Additionally, Generation Y and Generation Z seek to balance the responsibilities that the bride-to-be will face when entering married life through the implementation of a bridal shower, which is meant to provide relaxation and peace of mind to the bride before those responsibilities take hold. While preparing for the various obligations related to the wedding, during the bridal shower, they support each other, have fun, and enjoy the moment together, followed by offering advice and messages that carry special meaning for the bride.

These findings are expected to contribute new insights to the development of anthropological studies. However, this research has several limitations, particularly in terms of its scope and methodological approach. Therefore, further studies are needed in the future to explore the bridal shower trend more comprehensively, especially by analyzing the differences in how Generation Y and Generation Z conduct bridal shower rituals in regions where local traditions and cultural values remain strong. Such studies would significantly enrich our understanding of contemporary cultural dynamics within diverse local contexts.

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