

Proposal for an APA Scientific Group

Submission Date: April 18, 2025

Submitted to: APA Secretariat (secretariat@asianpa.org)

Cc: Professor James KS (ksjames@gmail.com)

1. Title of the Scientific Group

Exploring the Impact of Youth Sexuality and Romantic Relationships on Marriage Delays and Celibacy in Asia

2. Rationale for the Theme

Marriage patterns across Asia are undergoing significant transformations, as increasing numbers of young individuals opt to delay marriage or remain single. This phenomenon contributes to declining fertility rates and an aging population. The dynamics surrounding these trends are influenced by shifting attitudes toward sexuality, romantic relationships, and intimacy; however, their demographic and health implications are still inadequately addressed.

In East Asia, particularly in Japan and South Korea, economic pressures and evolving gender norms have led to postponed union formation. Conversely, in South Asia, including countries such as Iran and India, traditional cultural expectations often conflict with modern aspirations, creating complex challenges. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia, exemplified by Indonesia, showcases a blend of traditional values and globalization that profoundly impacts youth behavior.

This Scientific Group (SG) aims to investigate how varying perceptions of sexuality and romantic relationships contribute to these demographic shifts. By providing critical insights into population health—such as mental well-being and reproductive health—and social structures—including family support dynamics and labor market implications—our work has the potential to inform public policy on youth welfare, gender equity, and population sustainability. This theme is thus highly relevant for encouraging cross-national dialogue within the APA and related disciplines.

3. Chair

Name: Farideh Khalajabadi Farahani, PhD., Associated Professor

Institutional Affiliation: Family Research Institute, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

Expertise: She has a background in epidemiology and population health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Her field of research comprises of population health, sexual and reproductive health, family demography, and youth transitions in Asia. Her research focuses on Population Health, youth sexuality and marriage, sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people, and Family Research. She has been cited 2659 times, and she has authored books, with the most recent update in April 17, 2025.

4. List of Members (4 members)

Member	Affiliation	Expertise	e-mail	Focus Area
Stuart Gietel-Basten	China	<p>- Professor, Divisions of Social Science and Public Policy; Associate Dean (Research), School of Humanities and Social Science</p> <p>- Division of Social Science, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong SAR</p> <p>- Guest Professor, Graduate School of Medicine, University of Osaka, Japan</p> <p>- Adjunct Clinical Professor, School of Medicine and Health Science, Khalifa University, UAE</p> <p>Specialization: Age and Sex Structure, Ageing, Estimates and Projections, Fertility, Gender Roles- Differentials, Historical Demography, Marriage, Divorce and Consensual Unions, Mortality, Health, and Longevity, Policy and Ethics, Population and Development, Qualitative Demography, Reproductive Health (Family Planning), Social Demography, Theory, Training, Documentation, Information</p>	sgb@ust.hk	South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia
K.G. Santhya	India	<p>Senior Associate, Population Council, India</p> <p>K.G. Santhya, PhD is a demographer based in Kerala, India, with over two decades of experience. She specializes in inter-disciplinary research concerning health and development issues. She holds a Ph.D. in population studies from Flinders University, Australia, and M.A. degrees in economics and population studies from the University of Kerala. You can contact her at kgsanthya@outlook.com or by calling 919810345168.</p>	kgsanthya@outlook.com	South Asia

Member	Affiliation	Expertise	e-mail	Focus Area
Tazeen Saeed Ali	Pakistan - The Aga Khan University, Pakistan - RN, RM, BScN, MSc (Epidemiology), & PhD (Medical Sciences, Global Health), & Post Doctorate (Equity and Policy development) - Shakur Jamal Endowed Professor - Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, and The Department of Community Health Sciences, The Aga Khan University	Tazeen Saeed Ali is a professor with experience in higher education, specializing in epidemiology, global health, and healthcare policy. She holds a PhD in Medical Science from Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, and a Master's in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Her research interests include women's and children's health, gender studies, and violence against children and women, as evidenced by her work at Aga Khan University.	tazeen.ali@aku.edu	South Asia
Milad Bagi	Iran Assistant Professor of Demography, Bu-Ali Sina University, Faculty of Economics & Social Sciences, Hamedan, Iran	(Milad Bagi is a demographer with a background in social sciences. He has published research papers and his research interests include family and household change, and demography.	bagi.milad@gmail.com	West Asia (Middle East)

Note: All members will confirm their APA membership. The proposed team reflects a diverse geographical representation from East, and South Asia, and the Middle East, ensuring a comprehensive perspective.

5. Objectives and Provisional Program of Activities (June 2025–December 2027)

Objectives

1. To investigate the influence of youth sexuality and romantic relationships on marriage delays and celibacy across Asia.
2. To map regional variations in these trends and identify the underlying factors.
3. To assess the impacts on population health and socioeconomic outcomes.
4. To develop interdisciplinary analytical frameworks.
5. To formulate evidence-based policy recommendations.

Provisional Program

Year 1 (June 2025–May 2026): Foundation Phase

- **Inaugural Workshop (Q3 2025, Virtual):** Launch the SG, establish research priorities, and feature keynote presentations from members.
- **Literature Review (Q4 2025):** Compile existing studies and datasets on youth sexuality and marriage trends.
- **Call for Proposals (Q1 2026):** Fund 3–5 pilot studies through APA or external grants.

Year 2 (June 2026–December 2027): Research and Impact Phase

- **Symposium (Q2 2026, APA Conference):** Present findings from pilot studies and host a policy panel discussion.
- **Field Research (Q3–Q4 2026):** Conduct empirical studies in Iran, China, India, Pakistan, utilizing surveys and focus groups.
- **Policy Brief/Webinar (Q1 2027):** Disseminate findings to relevant stakeholders.
- **Culminating Conference (Q2 2027, Hybrid):** Launch a comprehensive book or special journal issue.

Ongoing activities will include quarterly virtual meetings and the establishment of an APA webpage dedicated to project resources.

6. Planned Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs:

1. Working paper based on workshop outcomes (2025).
2. Annotated bibliography and data repository (2026).
3. 3–5 peer-reviewed articles (2027).
4. Policy brief and accompanying webinar (2027).
5. Edited volume or special issue in a relevant journal (e.g., Asian Population Studies, 2027).

Outcomes:

1. Enhanced understanding of the role of youth sexuality in demographic changes.
2. Evidence-based policy recommendations to support youth health and family dynamics.
3. Strengthening the APA network for collaborative, cross-national research initiatives.
4. Provision of mentorship opportunities for early-career researchers.

7. Resources and Funding

Resources Needed:

- Travel expenses for symposium/conference attendance (~\$5,000).
- Publication fees (~\$2,000).
- Webinar hosting (~\$500).
- Research assistant support (~\$3,000).
- **Total Estimated Cost:** \$10,500 over 2.5 years.

Potential Funding Sources:

1. APA seed grants (if available).
 2. External grants (e.g., from UNFPA).
 3. Institutional support from member organizations (e.g., National University of Singapore, Australian National University).
- The Scientific Group will implement a collaborative fundraising strategy, capitalizing on member networks and resources.

Closing Statement

This Scientific Group addresses a pressing demographic challenge in Asia, merging insights from population health and social sciences to explore the impact of youth sexuality on marriage and celibacy trends. With a diverse and expert team and a comprehensive activity plan, we aim to produce meaningful research and policy insights that will enhance the APA's leadership in the field. We welcome feedback from the Council to refine our approach further.

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