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Problems Associated with Trend of Late Marriage : A Theoretical Analysis

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Abstract: The increasing trend of late marriage has become a prominent social phenomenon in almost every society, especially among those with higher levels of education which is mainly due to a number of variables like increased educational attainment, building a good career with financial stability in life, goal setting and aspirations, economic constraints, and shifting social attitudes and values. Delaying marriage may result in a number of social, psychological, biological, and demographic issues, even though it has advantages including increased financial security and personal maturity. Through a review of the literature and pertinent sociological ideas, this theoretical study investigates the main issues related to late marriage.The study draws attention to problems like declining rate of fertility, various problems related to reproductive health, psychological stress, challenges in choosing and getting a good partner ,smaller families, and wider demographic ramifications. The study offers a thorough grasp of the difficulties associated with delayed marriage by combining viewpoints from Structural Functionalism, Social Exchange Theory, and Life Course Theory. The findings suggests that late marriage is a result of modern socio-economic changes, but has important ramifications for individuals, families and society that need more research.
Keywords: Late marriage, marital adjustments, career attainment.

Introduction - One significant trend in recent years has been the postponement of marriage until later in life, especially among those with higher levels of education, which is a significant change to marriage, a fundamental social institution in every region of the world for both men and women; furthermore, average age of marriage has been rising for both sexes over the last several decades. It is seen that more than half of marriages occur after age 30 in many developed nations (Carroll, 2017). Scholars and policymakers are interested in this development. There is a noticeable postponement of marriage age across various cultures due to contemporary education requirements, which runs counter to traditional expectations that favored early marriage. Various structural factors also play a role in this decision. A person's socioeconomic status and the options available to them are heavily influenced by their level of education, which in turn affects many aspects of their lives, such as when they choose to tie the knot. A decline in the number of marriages has been marked globally for decades, specifically among economically developed regions, such as Europe and the U.S. (Maharaj & Shangase, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

1. Structural-Functionalism: According to structural functionalists, marriage performs crucial roles like social integration, reproduction, emotional support, and social stability. A delayed marriage can put off starting a family and having a child, which are two of these functions.

2. The social exchange theory: According to the Social Exchange Theory, people choose for relationships in which they receive the most benefits with the least cost. Spending more time and emphasis on education and job may mean delaying marriage and having a harder time choosing a companion. Nowadays, many believe that marriage and relationships need a major commitment, increased demands from their families and spouse, and receive less in return.

3. Theory of the life cycle: The key idea behind Life Course Theory is the timing of events (Elder,1988). Marriage delays might affect future developments such as becoming a parent, developing a family, and investing for retirement. All these milestones of life are getting delayed day by day. Late marriage offers several advantages, according to social scientific circles. However, it may also be the cause of numerous issues with coupling behaviors and family stability (Carroll, 2017). According to a nationwide survey of Millennials (those between the ages of 18 and 33), late marriage is widely supported.

According to Hawkins et al. (2022), the majority of them concur that late marriage is associated with both husband and wife being more mature, more likely to be excellent partners, and more likely to accomplish their own goals

without regrets in the future. Individuals who put off getting married may benefit more in their marriages both physically and spiritually than those who get married young, but they may also experience issues with their spouses or the families of their wives. These marriages may end in divorce since it is hard for partners who have been single for a long period to live together (Ozarslan, 2020). Therefore, even if getting married later in life has numerous advantages, it also has many drawbacks.

Marriage has long been acknowledged as one of the most essential social institutions, acting not only as a form of family formation, but also as a source of emotional, social and economic support. Traditionally, marriage has been seen as the passage into adulthood in cultures and communities and has been associated with childbirth, social stability and familial lineage (Parsons & Bales, 1955). However, major social and economic changes in the previous decades have changed the traditional marriage patterns, and have led to a large increase in the age at which people tend to marry.

The tendency of late marriage has gotten more and more in the world. Higher levels of educational achievement, professional development, financial independence, urbanization and changing attitudes towards partnerships have all encouraged many people to delay marriage until later stages of life (Cherlin, 2010). In many societies today, young individuals are more interested in personal development and professional achievement before they commit to marriage. These developments suggest increased opportunity and individual freedom but have also prompted alarm among scholars about the repercussions of delayed marriage.

Marriage at a later age alters the conventional life trajectory significantly, according to sociologists. Timing of significant life events impacts adult growth and social experiences, according to Life Course Theory (Elder, 1998). Future changes including becoming a parent, starting a family, and assimilating into society may be impacted by postponing marriage. Similarly, according to Structural Functionalists, marriage serves vital societal and individual purposes, such as providing emotional support, reproducing offspring, and facilitating socialization (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Consequently, big shifts in when people tie the knot might affect more than just families and communities.

The benefits of marrying later in life include being emotionally mature, financially stable and choosing the right partner. But late marriages have its disadvantages too. Studies show that late marriage may be related to fertility constraints, reproductive health problems, mental health problems, difficulty of locating acceptable partners and smaller families (Becker, 1981; Cherlin, 2010). Furthermore, unmarried adults in societies where early marriage continues to be a societal norm may endure social pressure, stigma, and family anxiety about their marital status.

It is growing more widespread and could have dire implications, thus we need to consider delayed marriage from several theoretical perspectives. The present study reviews demographic, social and psychological literature on late marriage to identify its most important aspects. The study intends to present a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of the late marriage on the individual, family and the society through a theoretical analysis in the context of continuous evolution of the society.

A new study finds the trend toward later life marriage has widespread implications for individuals and families. The average age of first marriage is rising across the board with more and more people delaying marriage to establish themselves financially, professionally and educationally. The change has created more options for career and personal development – but experts have identified a number of issues with delaying marriage. For example, several studies suggested that declining fertility with age and shorter reproductive duration may diminish the probability of childbearing for people who marry later (Liu & Wang, 2022). According to studies, in nations where marriage is still highly anticipated, deferring marriage and having children might cause emotional anguish, peer pressure, or feelings of solitude (Noda et al., 2023). Late marriage and motherhood have raised concerns about reproductive health, family dynamics, and fertility rates in nations like India (Singh et al., 2025). Furthermore, recent research has shown that marrying later in life can have an impact on a variety of health outcomes, including emotional adjustment, long-term family planning, and social relationships (Dwivedi & Tripathi, 2025). The findings suggest that late marriage is a reflection of changing society norms and personal preferences; however, they also raise important questions that the academic community should thoroughly investigate.

Positive aspects of late marriage

1. Getting opportunities to focus on personal growth: Some people are unable to concentrate on their own development because of the increased responsibilities that come with marriage (Karamat, 2016). Marriage can cut people off from having enough time to grow into their own unique selves. Since many people now value their occupations with their personalities, developing one's personality has become more vital in today's world. In instance, due to other obligations, women who get married and have children at a young age are unable to concentrate on developing their personalities. Pregnancy can cause some women to postpone their plans. Marriage at a later age can help people develop their personalities since it forces both men and women to put off plans that have to do with their maturation (Haotanto, 2016). As a result, men and women alike prioritize their own personal development as a means of putting off marriage. Many people prioritize their career development and personal growth as a result of marrying later in life. One of the benefits of postponing marriage, therefore, is the opportunity it gives people to concentrate on themselves and their development.

2. Adjustments and Stability in Marriage: The significance of the maturity effect is highlighted by a few of the researchers. Young couples are more likely to enter into marriage with unrealistic expectations, which can lead to marital problems. Young married couples may lack confidence in themselves and their abilities and have a limited understanding of who they are (Lehrer & Chen, 2013). As a result of having more time to choose their spouse, people who choose to divert their marriages end up in more traditional unions. Married people who have been single for a while tend to be more mature in their relationships with their spouses because they are more tolerant, knowledgeable, calm under pressure, and willing (Karamat, 2016). One study found that the likelihood of divorce drops by 11% for every additional year of age at marriage, and that marrying at a later age also reduces the likelihood of divorce.Marriage can be fulfilling for both partners even in the absence of a biological child. The significance of examining the definition of marital adjustment should be prioritized before expressing the adjustment between spouses. The phrase "marital adjustment" refers to the process by which a couple and an individual can improve their relationship by changing their behavior and the way they interact with one other. The marital adjustment between the man and woman is not negatively impacted, even when there is no child and a woman cannot be a parent. Researchers have shown that couples without children are likely to react in the same way, which could lead them to romanticize their relationship. Being a parent may, therefore, limit one's ability to experience mate equivalence (Akhter & Bhat, 2018).

3. Education and Career: Because they do not place a high value on their marriage age, some people do not even consider getting married. They may focus on improving their financial situation and advancing their careers. The negative impacts of marriage on work-life balance and the impending birth of a child motivate many women to put off getting married (Karamat, 2016).

Some men, like some women, are more interested in advancing their careers than tying the knot. Marriage at a later age can open doors for people to further their education and careers. Some people put off getting married because they are focused on their careers or because they want to finish school first (Haotanto, 2016). Education has become a necessity in today's opportunities. One important reason people are putting off marriage is the rise of women in positions of power in society, particularly in the workplace and in educational institutions. In conclusion, becoming married at a later age allowed them more time to concentrate on their studies and future careers.

4. Promoting Mental Wellness: In comparison to their single or divorced counterparts, married people are more likely to experience life's general enjoyment, according to a number of comprehensive studies (Vitelli, 2017). People who go through a divorce are more likely to report mental health issues, such as depression. Canadian adults aged 18–25 were questioned as part of the longitudinal study. This investigation began in 1985 and has been ongoing ever since. Between the ages of 19 and 25, there were young adults, and between 32 and 45, there were middle-aged people. The participants gradually disclosed information about their marital status, the age of their first marriage, and the occurrence of divorce. Additionally, they provided information regarding their demographics, including the education level of their parents, gender, and the family's income at the age of 43. They were tested for happiness, depression symptoms, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. One helpful aspect of the comparison was the age gap between the individuals. Depending on whether they got married "early,""on time," or "late," participants were divided into three groups for the study. "Early" indicated the wedding was before the age of 23, "on time" meant it was between the ages of 23 and 27, and "late" meant it was after the age of 27. The men's marriage was considered "early" if it took place before the age of 26, "on time" if it took place between 27 and 30, and "late" if it took place after the age of 30. Midlife depression symptoms were least common in those who were married on time or later in life, according to the results. According to their stated happiness or self-esteem, there was no correlation with their subsequent marital conditions; however, those who reported depressive symptoms at the age of 18 were more likely to get a divorce. The researchers concluded from their analysis that early marriage may be fraught with difficulty due to the additional responsibilities that come with starting a family at a young age. That may continue to face significant challenges in fulfilling their educational or occupational aspirations. A number of factors, including increased pressure from extended family members or an unexpected pregnancy, might lead to an early marriage (Vitelli, 2017). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that marital status influences mental health. Marrying later in life can bring more happiness than getting married young.

Negative aspects of late marriage

1. The Birth Rate Decline: Since most people agree that getting married is a must if you want to have kids, marrying at a later age undermines one of the most basic functions of families: passing the family gene pool down through generations (Eralp & Gokmen, 2020). Delaying childbearing, which impacts population increase, is one of the most significant negative repercussions of late marriage. Contrary to popular belief, a woman's fertility starts to decline in her late twenties, according to a study published in Human Reproduction (Karamat, 2016).Fertility declines and difficulties giving birth may arise as a result of women putting off marriage (Karamat, 2016).

Women nowadays typically wait more than 28 years before tying the knot for the first time. Half of all women are married for the first time when they are much older, and many of those women don't try to conceive until they are

well past the age of 30, according to the median age of first marriage. As said before, if a woman's fertility begins to decline in her twenties, she may find it more challenging to conceive in her nearly thirtys compared to her twenties. Internationally, the current generation of women is having fewer children than previous generations (Mcllhaney & Sprigg, 2021). As a result, fewer people are having children, which contributes significantly to global population decline (Karamat, 2016).

2. Abnormality in Children and Difficult Pregnancy: Women who delay marriage may experience a decrease in fertility and complications during childbirth (Karamat, 2016).

These days, the average age that a woman must wait before she gets married is over 28. According to the median age of first marriage, half of all women are married at a far later age, and many of those women wait until they are well past the age of 30 before trying to conceive. It may be more difficult for a woman to conceive in her almost 30s than in her twenties if her fertility starts to diminish in her twenties, as mentioned before. Globally, today's women aren't having as many children as their parents' generation (Mcllhaney & Sprigg, 2021). This has led to a dramatic drop in the world's population as fewer people choose to start a family (Karamat, 2016).

3. Conflict between the Partners: While some older couples may find marital stability through marriage at a later age, this is not always the case. This applies to everyone, not only those who tie the knot later in life. When two people with vastly different personalities, upbringings, views, preferences, and life experiences tie the knot, the inevitable friction that ensues accounts for about 70% of all marriage disputes (Reisser & Reisser, 2019). No matter how young the spouses are, these disparities will always be a source of contention. On the other hand, late-life couples have unique preferences, tastes, and life experiences that make them unique. The importance of these factors cannot be overstated, as a person's life outlook changes with age, and as a result, marital harmony might be compromised. Those who wait until later in life to tie the knot are likely to be rule-abiding and not the most sociable people. Because of this, couples often find it challenging to reach a compromise (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). The difficulty in adjusting to married life stems from this shared experience between the partners. Marriage at a later age allows people more time to grow into their selves. With their free time, they can explore, study, etc. The rules and characteristic capabilities of an individual change as they age, and they also develop several borders (Haotanto, 2016). Certain agreements between spouses can be obstructed by these boundaries. That is why some elderly partners would rather get a divorce than try to work things out with their spouse.

4. Separation of Generations: Parents and Children: The potential generational divide that results from marriages that take place too late is bad for families and communities (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). When people of different ages don't interact with one another, it can be frustrating; conversely, it can be a beneficial cultural division that helps people grow into their own unique identities (Adcox, 2021). Because the community's operations throughout the youth of both generations colored their beliefs about the world, this generational divide causes a lack of contact and arrangement between the two (Nagaraj, 2019). This generation divide manifests itself in late marriage and the numerous arguments that ensue between parents and children. Even though they share a common language, members of various generations may use it differently (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). Additionally, parents' worldviews make it hard for them to tolerate their children's mistakes, which can lead to a breakdown in communication and understanding. Couples who have passed away and their children just do not have enough time to be together. For instance, Nagaraj (2019) notes that older parents may find it difficult to play with their children due to fatigue.

Discussion: All of the benefits and drawbacks have been discussed up to this point, and the primary reasons why people choose to get married later in life will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs. Within this section, we will examine the pieces of information in a concise manner. First and foremost, in the twenty-first century, young people are more concerned with the decisions they make regarding their education and careers because they want to be in a position where they are financially secure. The practice of cohabitation has also become increasingly common among people. Another reason for delaying marriage is because this is a consideration. Due to the fact that, when we examine the literature, we come to the realization that the drawbacks are more significant than the advantages, late marriage has a greater number of disadvantages than advantages. The majority of the drawbacks are almost always connected to health concerns. A few examples of the challenges that spouses may confront include the death of a baby, difficult pregnancy, the possibility of HIV infection, and abnormalities in children. Aside from these factors, the drop in birth rates is another factor that contributes to the slowdown in population growth. Late marriage is another factor. On the other hand, the generation gap is another crucial issue because there are usually problems that occur when there is an excessive age gap between the parents and the children. It is possible that these disagreements will lead to insufficient communication within the family. Conversely, the advantages of getting married later in life do not appear to be more significant than the disadvantages of getting married later in life. One of the benefits of being married later in life is the opportunity for personal development; nevertheless, individuals who are already married have the opportunity to grow as individuals.

Many married couples choose to continue their education, career choices, and personal development together because they believe that this is the best way for

them to make progress. However, because these couples accept each other's individuality, they do not have to be together all the time. Because of this, having time for one's own personal development is not a sufficient advantage. A further advantage for individuals who are not married is the availability of educational and professional development options. Because of the chance of becoming pregnant while they are married, women who wish to continue their education are anxious about the possibility of being pregnant. In the same way that women do, men face the same challenges since they are required to work when they are married. As a result, they desire to be financially independent. The stability of a marriage is a significant benefit; yet, there is no evidence to support this assertion, taking into consideration that individuals who get married later in life may also experience problems. Therefore, after weighing the benefits and drawbacks of getting married later in life, we have come to the conclusion that the negatives of getting married later are by far more significant than the benefits.

Conclusion: To sum up, marriage is still an important institution since it spreads the building blocks of a family, which is the first social unit (Karamat, 2016). As a result of social shifts toward permitting sexual relations outside of marriage, differences in the value placed on women's and men's employment, and other factors, late marriage is becoming more common in industrialized nations. However, they are less interested in starting a family or getting married at a young age due to the increased job opportunities for both sexes. A small number of paradoxes discourage young adults from considering marriage. An important reason why more and more people are choosing not to get married is the rise in cohabitation, as already indicated.

On the other hand, rather of contributing to population expansion, late marriage becomes a big issue. Beyond this, the timing of a woman's pregnancies and subsequent births is impacted by her marriage at a later age. Personal development, financial autonomy, and other chances are among the benefits of marrying later in life. People and society should not disregard any pros and cons. Due to population growth and other factors, some communities do not encourage late marriage, while others do. Bringing up the topic of late marriage in this paper primarily serves to provide readers with some background on the subject. Getting used to living alone, adjusting to premarital sex and living with someone else, finding the perfect person, advancing in one's job, and education are all reasons why many people put off getting married these days. Although they only perceive benefits while they continue to put off getting married, they soon discover that there are drawbacks to this decision as well. This paper aims to highlight both the advantages and downsides for that reason.

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