

The Positive and Negative Effects of Late Marriage

Aleyna Hatice Gündoğdu, Sefa Bulut

Department of Counseling Psychology, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Türkiye

Email: sefabulut22@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Gündoğdu, A. H., & Bulut, S. (2022). The Positive and Negative Effects of Late Marriage. *Open Journal of Depression*, 11, 63-71.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojd.2022.114005>

Received: July 21, 2022

Accepted: October 9, 2022

Published: October 12, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Late marriage is a factor that has both advantages and disadvantages. Although some people prefer to get married in their late life and some people do not have an opportunity to get married at a suitable age, both of them would face the consequences of late marriage. Contrary to what is known, late marriage does not just include either disadvantages or advantages. It combines both of them into people's life. Nowadays, both men and women prefer late marriage because they want economic empowerment in their life. Also, if these people study in universities or for master's or Ph.D., their marriage age would be late. On the other hand, career targets make people delay their marriages even if they have a partner in their life. When they delay their marriage age, they may face advantages, such as time for personal growth, education and career opportunities, good mental health, and disadvantages, such as birth rate, disagreement between spouses, and the risk of HIV. This paper aims to comprehend and explain the fundamental reasons why people delay their marriages briefly, the advantages of late marriage, and the disadvantages of late marriage. In addition to these, another aim is to specify whether the advantages predominate or disadvantages. In the research method part, we review the literature about late marriage and the advantages and disadvantages of late marriage, and then we try to determine the idea of whether late marriage is good or not in the discussion part.

Keywords

Late Marriage, Delaying Marriage, Birth Rate, Mental Health, Population Growth

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the age of marriage has been increasing in every re-

gion of the world for both men and women; furthermore, more than half of marriages occur after age 30 in many developed nations (Carroll, 2017). 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). The reason for delaying marriage includes three paradoxes. The first paradox is cohabitation that many young adults believe in living together before matrimony because they think it acts as a “test drive”. Many people believe that cohabitation before marriage declines the number of divorces; however, many researchers point out that cohabitation before marriage has historically been connected with greater probabilities of divorce (Carroll, 2017). Marriage rate decreases have usually accompanied by non-marital cohabitation and pre-marital childbearing (Maharaj & Shangase, 2020). So, people delay their marriage even if they are in a relationship. In addition to this, the second paradox is the “Sowing Wild Oats” paradox. According to some young adults, the time for them is to experiment sexually, “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow when they die”. So, these people get unchaste attitudes and behaviors; moreover, as dozens of researches indicate, those with higher practices of sexual promiscuity and more sexual ideals have a higher possibility of divorce when they marry. The last paradox is the “Older is Better” paradox. Many young adults think that marriage is a transition of harm rather than the transition of benefit; for this reason, the adults wait for getting married until almost their thirties (Carroll, 2017).

According to social science circles, late marriage has many positive effects. However, it can also be a reason for many troubles in family stability and coupling patterns (Carroll, 2017). A national survey of Millennials (ages 18 - 33) demonstrated widespread support for late marriage. Most of them have agreed that late marriage refers to both husband and wife would be more mature, more likely to be good spouses, and more likely to achieve their personal goals without regrets in their future life (Hawkins et al., 2022). People who are delaying their marriage age can have more advantages both spiritually and physically in their marriages than people who are married at an early age; however, they can have problems with their wives or their wives’ families. It is difficult to share the same environment with spouses who had lived single for a long time; that is why these marriages can result in divorce (Özarslan, 2020). So, although late marriage has positive effects on people, it also has many negative effects. This paper touches on both the positive effects and negative effects on people.

2. Advantages

2.1. Time for Personal Growth

Responsibilities increase with marriage; for this reason, some people cannot focus on their personal growth (Karamat, 2016). When people get married, they might not have enough time for the development of their personality. In the modern era, personality growth begins to be more important than before be-

cause many people have started to give importance to their careers as well as their personalities. In particular, women who get married early and give birth cannot focus on their personality growth because of their other responsibilities. Some women can delay their plans when they are pregnant. Besides women, men may also have to delay their plans related to their personality growth; therefore, late marriage can be a way of developing people's personalities (Hao-tanto, 2016). So, personal growth is a significant factor in delaying marriage, and both men and women take care of it. Due to late marriage, many people focus on their career development and personalities. For this reason, focusing on personal growth is one of the advantages of delaying marriage for people.

2.2. Marital Stability and Adjustments

Some of the researchers point out the importance of the maturity effect. At an early age, marriages can be at a higher risk of disruption because the spouses are more likely to be based on mistaken expectations. The young spouses might have insufficient self-knowledge and be unconfident about their own and their partners' potential characteristics (Lehrer & Chen, 2013). People who divert marriage have plenty of time to choose the marriage partner of their choice thereby directing them to a regular marriage. People who spend their years as single before marriage can display more adulthood in their matrimonial marriages due to their quality of tolerance, knowledge, tranquility under stress, and willingness (Karamat, 2016). According to a study, late marriage declines the possibility of divorce, and the data reveals that each supplemental year of age at the time of matrimony diminishes the divorce by eleven percent. Because of age, the level of maturity in people's thinking and behavior increases; therefore, people deliberate more virtually on what they desire from a lifetime relationship as they grow older (Haotanto, 2016). On the other hand, marital adjustment can be enough between the spouses even if there is no child. Before expressing the marital adjustment between the spouses, it is significant to examine the meaning of marital adjustment. Marital adjustment is a term that encompasses the way to modify, acquire, or adjust an individual and couple's exemplary behavior and association to achieve the most intense satisfaction in the relationship. Although there is no child, and a woman cannot be childbearing, the marital adjustment between the woman and the man does not affect in a bad way. Many studies have emphasized the consensus of reaction between childless spouses who may romanticize their relationship anyway. So, parenthood might deprive the capacity of equivalency between mates (Akhter & Bhat, 2018).

2.3. Education and Career Opportunities

Some people do not think about marriage because they do not give importance to their marriage age. They might take care of their economic status and career development. In particular, many women delay their marriage because of childbearing and the unfavorable effects of being married on work-life (Karamat,

2016). Besides women, some men also do not prefer to get married due to their career development. Late marriage can provide people to pursue their career and educational dreams. Some people postpone their marriage due to their career pursuits as well as some people delay because of their educational plans (Hao-tanto, 2016). In today's opportunities, education has become an essential need for people. Notably, the increase in the number of women's places in both education and work environment has become a fundamental reason for delaying marriage. To sum up, late marriage let people continue their education life and focus on their career choices.

2.4. Good Mental Health

Some comprehensive researches indicate that married people are more likely to have general life pleasure than their single or divorced partners (Vitelli, 2017). People who get divorced tend to declare emotional troubles, for example, depression. The longitudinal study surveyed Canadian adults from 18 to 25 years. The study was conducted in 1985 and continued from time to time. There were young adults whose ages were 19, 20, 22, and 25, and middle adults whose ages were 32 and 45. Over time, participants delivered details regarding their marital status, age of first marriage, and if they were ever divorced. They also gave their demographic report on parental schooling, level of education reached, gender, and family earnings at age 43. Their level of happiness, the existence of depressive symptoms, self-esteem, and life satisfaction were measured. The age difference between the participants was a useful way of making a comparison. For the study, participants were put into three categories depending on whether they married "early," "on time," or "late". For women, "early" referred to the wedding before the age of 23, "on time" meant they wedded between the ages of 23 and 27, and "late" was defined as they married after the age of 27. For men, "early" meant a wedding before the age of 26, "on time" referred to between the ages of 27 and 30, and "late" meant they married after 30. Outcomes exhibited that people who got married on time or late were least likely to convey depressive symptoms in midlife. People who said depressive signs at the age of 18 tend to be divorced later in life according to their said satisfaction or self-esteem had no relationship with the later marital situations. In analyzing their consequences, the researchers recommended that people who marry earlier might encounter challenges because of the extra duties of instituting a family at an early age. That can retain a quite hardship in achieving their educational purposes or career goals. Early marriage may ensue due to raised force from family fellows or an unpredictable pregnancy that can be a big reason for early marriage (Vitelli, 2017). So, it is possible to say that marriage affects mental status. People who get married later in their life can be happier than people who get married early.

3. Disadvantages

3.1. The Decline in Birth Rate

Worldwide, the establishment of the marriage bond is generally accepted as a

prerequisite for fertility; therefore, late marriage negatively affects the fundamental function of family institutions' persistence of lineage (Eralp & Gökmen, 2020). One of the most major negative impacts of late marriage is delayed childbearing which impresses population growth. A study published in Human Reproduction says that a woman's fertility begins decreasing as early as her late 20s and not in her thirties as was previously believed (Karamat, 2016). Many women's ovarian responsiveness drives into the zone, and as this decline develops, women have less possibility of becoming pregnant (McIlhaney & Sprigg, 2021). Because women delay their marriage, this decreases their fertile years, and endeavors at birth may become difficult (Karamat, 2016). Today the median age of first marriage for women is over 28 years. The median age of first marriage represents that half of all women get married for the first time when even more aged, with many not attempting pregnancy until well after age 30. As it is mentioned above, if fertility starts to decrease in women's twenties, the possibility of getting pregnant might be more difficult in their almost thirties than in their twenties. Women around the world have fewer babies compared to their old generation (McIlhaney & Sprigg, 2021). For this reason, the childbearing rate is decreasing worldwide, which is a major factor in the decline of the population (Karamat, 2016).

3.2. Abnormality in Children and Difficult Pregnancy

Late marriage can also be a reason for abnormality in children. Even if the women can give birth, sometimes these births result in children having mental problems. On the other hand, sperm loses its vitality which can direct many abnormalities in children (Karamat, 2016). An older mother might face some risks during her pregnancies, for example, miscarriage, birth defects, high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, and difficult labor. Some studies indicate that although there is a risk of pregnancy issues in older women over 30 their babies might not have more problems than babies of younger women (University of Rochester Medical Center, 2021). The problems of the babies are not just related to mothers, older fathers' can also be one of the main reasons. For example, one of the research indicates that the children of older men, who were 40 or over 40, were 5.75 times more likely to have an autism spectrum disorder than children of men under 30 years (Karamat, 2016). In addition, there are risks for chromosome problems; therefore, those types of issues arise with the mother's age (University of Rochester Medical Center, 2021). That is why the possibility of having a child with Down Syndrome increases over time, the chance of having another baby with Down Syndrome is more heightened after having one child with Down Syndrome. Aging has a vital position in fertility because of the decline in oocytes which has an essential role in the quality of fertility for women. In older women, the oocytes might include abnormal chromosome division, a decline in mitochondrial quality, increased oxidative stress, and a decline in antioxidant levels (Shirasuna & Iwata, 2017). For this reason, these changes in women's pregnancy may cause baby loss or difficulty in their pregnancy. While

women delay their marriage ages, they also delay their possibility of getting pregnant. That is why late marriage is crucial for women's pregnancy plans.

3.3. Late Marriage and the Risk of HIV

People who postpone marriage might begin engaging in pre-marital sexual behavior. For this reason, the risk of acquiring sexually transferred diseases and infections including HIV is very high among never-married people compared to currently-married people. Females are more affected by diseases related to pre-marital sex than their male counterparts (Karamat, 2016). Pieces of evidence for a connection between the timing of marriage and HIV infection have been complex, and for the most part, advancing those young women in southern Africa who deviate from the local marriage ritual are at the biggest risk. Some studies have encountered a later than the average age at first marriage can be a reason for the risk of HIV infection, as women had a long period from first sexual intercourse until marriage and more premarital mates. In addition to this, the HIV epidemic may affect the timing of marriage in both direct and indirect ways. Direct experiences with HIV, such as the death or prolonged sickness of adult family members, may change a family's economy in ways that force a young person into marriage, either to facilitate the resource strain yielded by the loss of an economically active adult or to run the supplementary obligation of work that a young person may be requested to bear (Grant & Soler-Hampejsek, 2014). In addition to this, these types of infections also endanger the lives of adults; these infections decline the size of the workforce as they impact mainly adults in their most efficacious years of life. So, the results of pre-marital sex, HIV is higher for females than for males, and because pre-marital sex has been seen as very normal by many people, people do not prefer to get married especially in modern societies (Karamat, 2016).

3.4. Disagreement between the Spouses

Although late marriage can result in marital stability for some spouses, it would also be different for other older spouses. This situation does not just include people who get married late. Nearly 70% of all marital conflicts are endless because two individuals who have different temperaments, family backgrounds, life experiences, opinions, likes, and dislikes get married (Reisser & Reisser, 2019). These differences are a factor for disagreements even if the couples are young. However, a few of these differences are life experiences, likes, and dislikes that are essential for people who get married in their late ages. These are important because when a person is aging, his/her life perspective shapes, and this person may get difficult to agree with her/his husband or wife. People who delay marriage and get married later would have strict rules; therefore, these people would not be easygoing. For this reason, compromise becomes difficult for the spouses (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). In this sense, the problem of marital adjustments occurs between the spouses. People can develop their personalities if they get

married late. They have time to travel, learn, etc. However, while people get older, their rules and characteristic skills develop, and they have many borderlines (Haotanto, 2016). These borderlines can block some agreements between spouses. That is why some older spouses cannot make a compromise, and they want to divorce.

3.5. Generation Gap between Children and Parents

Late marriage is not beneficial for the family and society because it may lead to a generation gap between the children and parents (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). The definition of the generation gap is an irritating absence of contact between young and old or a valuable period that divides culture within a society permitting them to evolve their personality (Adcox, 2021). This gap provokes a lack of touch and arrangement between the two ages since the old generation's and the new's belief of the world was dyed by how the community operated during their youth (Nagaraj, 2019). Late marriage is a way of this generation gap, and there are many disagreements between children and parents. For example, different generations sometimes speak different languages even though they speak the same language (Akhter & Bhat, 2018). Also, parents tolerate their children's mistakes rarely because of their view of the world, so this lack of tolerance can result in a lack of communication and understanding. Besides these, late married couples and their children cannot have enough interactions. For example, older parents can get tired easily and cannot play with their children (Nagaraj, 2019).

4. Discussion

All advantages and disadvantages are mentioned above, and the fundamental reasons why people get married late are explained shortly. In this part, we briefly discuss the pieces of information. Firstly, in the twenty-first century, young people pay more attention to their education and career choices because they want to be economically comfortable. In addition, cohabitation has become common among people. That is another factor in delaying marriage. Late marriage has more disadvantages than advantages because when we review the literature, we realize that disadvantages are more crucial than advantages. All disadvantages are nearly related to health conditions. For example, spouses might face baby loss, difficult pregnancy, the risk of HIV infection, and abnormality in children. Besides these, late marriage is also a reason for decreased population growth due to the decline in birth rates. On the other hand, the generation gap is another important factor because if the age gap between parents and children is too much, there are always conflicts. These conflicts might result in inadequate communication in the family. On the contrary of disadvantages, the advantages of late marriage do not seem more essential than the disadvantages. For example, personal growth is one of the advantages of late marriage; however, people who are already married can develop themselves. Many married couples continue their education program, career choices, and personal growth, so they prefer

to develop themselves together. However, they do not have to be always together because these couples respect their individuality. For this reason, time for personal growth is not enough advantage. Additionally, unmarried people can benefit from opportunities for education and career plans. Women who want to continue their education are concerned about the possibility of getting pregnant during their marriage. Men have the same issues because, during their marriage, they have to earn money; for this reason, they want to be economically free. Marital stability is an important advantage, but there is no evidence to prove this statement as people who get married late might have disagreements as well. So, after comparing to advantages and disadvantages of late marriage, we think that the disadvantages of late marriage are more crucial than the advantages.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, marriage stays a significant organization that spreads the foundation of a family that is the origin of society (Karamat, 2016). In developed countries, the late marriage begins popular among people, and many people start not to give importance to marriage because of accepting pre-marital sex, priorities of women's and men's careers, and many other things. On the other hand, with the increase in career opportunities for both women and men, they do not want to have a baby or get married early or on time. Few paradoxes make young adults be away from the idea of marriage. For example, as was mentioned above, the increase in cohabitation is a significant factor for people not to get married. However, late marriage becomes a major problem for population growth instead of its benefits. In addition to this, late marriage also affects women's pregnancy period and childbearing due to birth timing. Late marriage also has some advantages, such as personal growth, financial independence, and other opportunities. All advantages and disadvantages should not be ignored by people and society. While some societies support late marriage, other societies do not sustain it because of population increase and other reasons. In this paper, the main aim of introducing late marriage is to make people have a perspective on it. As mentioned above, nowadays many people delay their marriages because of education and career opportunities, difficulty to find the right person, getting used to a single life, and becoming normal with pre-marital sex and living together. While their delaying process is continuing, they just see the advantages; however, when they decide to get married, they also face the disadvantages. For this reason, this paper tries to point out both advantages and disadvantages.

Conflicts of Interest

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

References

Adcox, S. (2021). *What Research Says about the Generation Gap: Generational Differ-*

ences and Their Causes.

- Akhter, R., & Bhat, M. R. (2018). Late Marriage Consequences and Concerns among Women of Kashmir Valley. *International Journal on Arts, Management and Humanities*, 7, 1-9.
- Carroll, J. (2017). Delaying Marriage: The Trends and the Consequences. *Ensign*, 24-27.
- Eralp, A., & Gökmen, Ş. (2020). Ortalama Evlilik Yaşının Yükselmesini Etkileyen Faktörler ve Cinsiyete Göre Farklılıklar. *Optimum: Journal of Economics & Management Sciences/Ekonomi ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 7, 395-411.
<https://doi.org/10.17541/optimum.698063>
- Grant, M. J., & Soler-Hampejsek, E. (2014). HIV Risk Perceptions, the Transition to Marriage, and Divorce in Southern Malawi. *Studies in Family Planning*, 45, 315-337.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4465.2014.00394.x>
- Haotanto, A. V. (2016). *Marrying Late: Pros & Cons—Why It Is No One Else's Business*.
- Hawkins, A. J., Carroll, J. S., Jones, E. M., & James, S. L. (2022). *Capstones vs. Cornerstones: Is Marrying Later Always Better? State of Our Unions*.
- Karamat, K. (2016). Perceptions on Implications of Delayed Marriage: A Case Study of Married Adults in Kuala Lumpur. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 6, 572-578. <http://www.ijssh.org/vol6/713-H159.pdf>
<https://doi.org/10.7763/IJSSH.2016.V6.713>
- Lehrer, E. L., & Chen, Y. (2013). Delayed Entry into First Marriage and Marital Stability: Further Evidence on the Becker-Landes-Michael Hypothesis. *Demographic Research*, 29, 521-542. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2013.29.20>
- Maharaj, P., & Shangase, T. (2020). Reasons for Delaying Marriage: Attitudes of Young, Educated Women in South Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 51, 3-17.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.51.1.002>
- McIlhaney, J. S., & Sprigg, P. (2021). *Fertility Rates, Delayed Marriage, and Infertility*. Institute for Family Studies.
- Nagaraj, V. (2019). *6 Tips to Fill the Generation Gap between Parent and Child*.
<https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/6-tips-to-fill-the-generation-gap-between-parent-and-child>
- Özarslan, S. (2020). Evlilik Yaşı ve İçerdiği Sorunlar. *Bartın Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14, 249-259.
- Reisser, T. K., & Reisser, P. C. (2019). *When You and Your Spouse Can't Agree*. Focus on the Family.
- Shirasuna, K., & Iwata, H. (2017). Effect of Aging on the Female Reproductive Function. *Contraception and Reproductive Medicine*, 2, Article No. 23.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40834-017-0050-9>
- University of Rochester Medical Center (2021). *Risk of Pregnancy over Age 30*.
<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=90&contentid=P02481>
- Vitelli, R. (2017). *What Is the Ideal Age for Getting Married: New Research Suggests That Late Can Be a Good Thing for Many People*.