

DELAYED MARRIAGES: CAUSES and Consequences

* OUTLINE:-

1. INTRODUCTION

- Hook
- Background

THESIS STATEMENT:- Delayed marriages are increasingly common due to social, educational, and economic factors, producing significant personal and societal consequences.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF MARRIAGE AGE

- Traditional Age of marriage in Different Societies (Median age at first marriage for women in Pakistan rose from 18.6 in 1990-91 to 20.4 in 2017 [BMC Women's Health 2018])
- Shift in Norms over Time, especially in urban and educated population (Urban women: median age 21.3 vs rural 19.8; women with higher education marry later [PDHS 2017-18])

3. CAUSES of DELAYED MARRIAGES:-

a) Pursuit of Higher education

- Increasing academic exploration among both genders. (UNESCO report 2021: 48% increase in female university enrollment)

- Late entry into workforce due to prolonged education. (ILO study 2020: average first

(Average graduation age for females 22-23 years [HEC Pakistan, 2020])

employment age has risen to 24 years).

B) ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

- Unemployment and underemployment.
(Pakistan Economic Survey 2023: Youth unemployment at 23%) (Youth unemployment 11.4%: 23 [WB])
- Rising cost of weddings (Average wedding cost increased by 25% over 5 years [State Bank of Pakistan, 2022])
- Financial instability among youth (monthly income of youth 20-29 years is 25,000 PKR [PBS, 2022])

C) Career Prioritization

- Focus on job stability and career growth before marriage (Women working in formal sector delay marriage; 35% marry after age 25 [World Bank Gender Report, 2021])

D) Urbanization and Changing Social Norms

- Urban residents marry later than rural counterparts (Urban median age 21.3 vs Rural 19.8 [PDHS 2017-18]) Pakistan demographic & health survey.
- Exposure to modern lifestyles contributes to delayed marriage (Sociology survey, Lahore, 2022 [LUMS Social Survey])

E) Personal Choices and Compatibility

- Increased in self-determined choices for life

partners (60% educated youth prioritize compatibility [Gallup Pakistan Survey, 2021])

F) Health awareness and fertility planning

- Awareness of reproductive health and family planning encourages delay (Contraceptive prevalence among married women 15-24 years: 34% [PDHS 2017-2018])

G) Parental influence and Family pressure

- Families prefer financial and social stability before marriage (Qualitative study, Punjab 2021 [Research Gate])

H) Cultural and Religious Practices

- Restriction based on sect, ethnicity, or family traditions (In a survey from Chakwal, 75% of respondents considered caste compatibility essential in spouse selection)
- Delays due to complex matchmaking processes (Ethnographic research from Kallar Syedan reports that family consent, tribal/sect norms, and prolonged searches for socially "acceptable" matches significantly delay marriages, especially for women [Nabeel & Jawed, 2025])

4. CONSEQUENCES OF DELAYED MARRIAGES

A) Positive Consequences

- 1) Maturity and Informed decision-making in

choosing partners - (Research from Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE, 2022) shows individuals marrying after age 28 report higher satisfaction in partner compatibility and long-term relationship success)

ii) Economic Stability and career development (UN Women Report, 2021): Women marrying later are 35% more likely to attain stable employment and professional growth.

iii) Empowerment and Autonomy, Especially for Women (World Bank, 2020: Delayed marriage correlates with higher participation of women in household decision-making and community leadership roles).

iv) Planned families and better parenting. (UNICEF Pakistan, 2021: Couples who marry later tend to have 1-2 children and invest more in child education and health)

B) NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

i) Biological changes and reduced fertility (WHO Report, 2022: Women above 35 face 20% higher risk of fertility-related complications and adverse pregnancy outcomes)

- ii) Increased mental health issues: Loneliness, depression, anxiety (Pakistan Mental Health Survey, 2021: Adults delaying marriages report 18% higher prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders)
- iii) Rising Social Levels: Extramarital affairs, casual relationships, cohabitation (Study in Urban Sindh, 2023: Delayed marriage correlates with 12% increase in cohabitation and non-traditional partnerships)
- iv) Social stigma, especially for women in conservative societies (Human Rights Watch, 2021: Women marrying after age 30 experience higher societal scrutiny in rural areas)
- v) Pressure on aging parents and family systems (Asian Development Bank Report, 2020: Late marriages increase dependency pressure on older family members for caregiving and financial support)

3) CONCLUSION