

Exploring the Impacts of Late Marriage: Insights from Malaysian Men and Women

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impacts of late marriage among Malaysian men and women. The primary objective is to explore late marriage's impacts on Malaysian men and women beyond the ideal age of marriage. A qualitative research method was used, involving semi-structured, in-depth interviews with four informants aged 30 and above from diverse backgrounds. The research findings highlight three social impacts of late marriage, such as trend shift, fertility rate, and spiritual growth. Financial stability, asset acquisition, and higher earnings were further found to be the economic impacts. Besides that, the findings also show how late marriage affects psychological aspects in terms of stress and self-worth. In conclusion, this research provides a dynamic perspective for society in understanding the impacts of late marriage, which is increasingly becoming a trend in Malaysia. The study further recommends that future research incorporate quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the prevalence of late marriage. Furthermore, discussions should also be facilitated through workshops or community forums that enable individuals or experts to share experiences and strategies to address late marriage's social, economic, and psychological impacts to create more holistic societal progress.

Keywords: late marriage, Malaysian men, Malaysian women, trends, career

INTRODUCTION

Late marriage refers to the situation where an individual is considered to have passed the ideal age for marriage. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (2016), the ideal age for marriage is usually around the mid-20s to late 20s. Ahmad (1990) states that "late marriage" refers to individuals who marry late, specifically those aged 30 and above, without exceptions based on religion, ethnicity, or race. According to Esteve et al. (2020), the universality of marriage in East Asia will be substantially eroded in the coming decades due to demographic changes and prevailing marriage norms. In recent years, the young generation in Malaysia has increasingly followed the late marriage trend. It reflects social, cultural, and economic changes in the country.

Statement of the Problem

Late marriage among Malaysian men and women has become a significant social issue, influenced by a range of cultural, economic, and personal factors. As more women pursue higher education and career advancement, traditional expectations of early marriage are increasingly challenged (Lee, 2023; Smith & Lee, 2018; Balestrino

& Ciardi, 2007). This shift often leads to demographic concerns such as declining birth rates and changing family dynamics (Gündoğdu & Bulut, 2022; Karamat, 2016; Saleem et al., 2015). Additionally, economic pressures, particularly in urban areas, further complicate marriage decisions as young adults grapple with the high cost of living and the desire for financial stability before settling down. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers and community leaders to create supportive frameworks that respect individual choices while addressing broader societal implications. This research can provide valuable insights that inform initiatives aimed at promoting balanced perspectives on marriage in the context of contemporary Malaysian society.

Research Objective

The study aims to achieve the following objective:

To explore the impacts of late marriage on Malaysian men and women beyond the ideal age of marriage.

Significance of the Research

This research studies the impacts of late marriage in Malaysia and offers several direct and indirect benefits to young Malaysians. As the trends of marriage and family life evolve, the findings from this study can provide valuable insights that help individuals make informed decisions about their futures, relationships, careers, and family planning.

Secondly, it can help policymakers design informed strategies to manage the implications of late marriage, particularly in terms of an ageing population, economic stability, gender equality, and public health. This study could lead to more supportive policies for young people who marry later. This will give the government more insight into making policy adjustments. For example, young adults may benefit from financial incentives such as housing subsidies, tax benefits, or family planning services, helping them manage the financial and social aspects of marrying later. In addition, it will guide the development of policies and programs that support young adults navigating marriage, family planning, and career development.

Further, this study offers a wealth of contributions for future researchers. It provides essential data, highlights gaps in existing knowledge, suggests new areas for investigation, and introduces potential theoretical advancements. Its findings can shape comparative studies, policy research, interdisciplinary investigations, and methodological innovations, ensuring that future researchers can build on a solid foundation to explore marriage's complex, evolving dynamics in modern society. Theoretically, it will enrich academic discussions on sociology, psychology, economics, and gender studies, providing a deeper understanding of how late marriage reflects broader societal changes and individual experiences.

RESEARCH LIMITATION

It is important to note that the experiences and perspectives shared by the informants in this study are influenced by their personal backgrounds, such as ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. These factors may have influenced their perspectives on late marriage, resulting in variations in how different groups perceive and interpret the phenomenon. For example, cultural and religious beliefs may have a significant impact on attitudes towards marriage timing, whereas socioeconomic factors may influence career and family priorities.

Furthermore, qualitative data collection, particularly through interviews, is inherently biased. The dynamics of the interview process, such as the rapport between the interviewer and the participants, may have influenced how openly informants shared their experiences. Furthermore, self-reporting limitations must be considered, as participants may have provided socially desirable responses or been influenced by their own personal reflections during the interviews. Future research could address these limitations by broadening the sample to include people from a variety of backgrounds and implementing data collection strategies to reduce biases, such as using multiple interviewers or conducting anonymous surveys.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Changing Meaning of Marriage

The meanings attached to marriage have changed significantly over time. In the past, marriage was often viewed as a social obligation or a way to secure economic stability and social status. In this new era, marriage is increasingly seen as a partnership centered around personal fulfillment and shared goals. The evolution of marriage from a traditional social obligation to a partnership emphasizing personal and professional fulfillment has resulted in individuals delaying marriage until they reach their goals (Davis, 2019). This shift reflects a broader cultural transformation that prioritizes individual happiness and personal achievement. As a result, many people now choose to delay marriage until they feel they have reached certain milestones in their personal and professional lives. For many, this means waiting until they have achieved stability or realized their aspirations.

Trend Shift

The trend shifts of decreasing marriage rates occurred because society values personal freedom and individual goals over family traditions (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2017; Omar & Jaafar, 2024). According to Wilcox et al. (2016), cultural factors such as individualism, a fading family-oriented ethos, and the decline of civil society all contribute to the decline of marriage and the growing class divide in marriage. Furthermore, cultural shifts such as increased acceptance of living together before marriage, increased independence for women, and a preference for personal over family values contributed to people marrying later. These changes are part of a larger trend of putting personal happiness and choice first.

Fertility Rate

Delayed marriage undermines the goal of family institutions to increase fertility rates (Gündoğdu & Bulut, 2022; Saleem et al., 2015). One of the primary consequences of late marriage is delayed childbearing, which has a negative impact on population growth. According to Karamat (2016), contrary to popular belief, a woman's fertility begins to decline in her late twenties rather than her thirties. Women who delay marriage shorten their reproductive years and may experience difficulties during childbirth. Because of this phenomenon, the global fertility rate is decreasing, which contributes significantly to population decline (Karamat, 2016).

Spirituality

Previous research indicates that spirituality and religious orientation significantly influence late-life development and marital satisfaction. Spiritual growth tends to become more prominent in the latter part of adulthood, especially among introspective individuals who have encountered stressful life events in their earlier years (Wink, 2003). The ageing process may enhance wisdom and maturity, especially when mystical concepts are incorporated into one's cognitive framework, as evidenced by research on Muslim Sufis (Ahmadi, 2000). Spirituality in later life correlates with personal growth, creativity, and the acquisition of new knowledge, whereas religious involvement is linked to the development of close relationships and community engagement (Wink, 2003).

Financial Stability

Research suggests that delayed marriage may enhance financial stability, as individuals have increased opportunities for education, career advancement, and personal financial development. Lehrer and Chen (2013) indicate that individuals who postpone marriage tend to attain higher educational levels and are more likely to obtain stable, well-paying employment, thereby improving their financial security. Furthermore, delayed marriage enables individuals to independently save and accumulate assets, leading to enhanced financial autonomy at the onset of marriage. The independent accumulation of wealth can establish a robust economic foundation for couples, thereby diminishing their financial interdependence. Prioritising individual financial preparation in late marriage establishes a stronger foundation for long-term economic stability within the marital relationship.

Asset Acquisition

Late marriage promotes increased asset acquisition, as individuals have additional time to focus on asset acquisition independently before marriage. By delaying marriage, many priorities career advancement and financial goals, leading to opportunities for homeownership, investments, and retirement savings. Thus, they have a more established financial foundation, reducing dependence on shared marital assets. This period of independent asset accumulation strengthens individuals' financial stability and contributes to a solid base of personal wealth, ultimately benefiting long-term household finances upon marriage (Lafortune & Low, 2017).

Earnings

Research suggests that delaying marriage can positively impact earnings, especially for women. Loughran and Zissimopoulos (2004) found that each year a woman postpones marriage, her hourly wage increases by almost 4%. Similarly, Chandler et al. (1994) reported that women who marry later tend to have higher wages. However, marriage can reduce women's wages slightly (by 2 to 4%) and slow wage growth for both men and women (Loughran & Zissimopoulos, 2007). Delaying childbirth also improves wages for married men and women (Chandler et al., 1994; Loughran & Zissimopoulos, 2007). These findings suggest a complex relationship between marriage timing and long-term earnings.

Stress

Research suggests that late marriage can have both positive and negative effects on individuals. While it may provide opportunities for personal growth, education, and career advancement (Gündoğdu & Bulut, 2022), late marriage can also increase stress. In Bangladesh, for instance, late marriage is becoming more common among youth, leading to psychosocial problems (Manjur et al., 2023). Other studies further indicate that married individuals generally experience greater happiness and less stress than their unmarried counterparts (Coombs, 1991).

Self-Worth

Marrying later gives couples a more mature perspective, which can help them focus on personal growth (Karamat, 2016). Additionally, marrying later provides more opportunities to explore their life interests than marrying earlier. Furthermore, late marriage gives individuals a more open-minded mindset, allowing them to accept and adapt to changing needs and circumstances due to their increased experience. For women, late marriage can help avoid the potential negative impact of pregnancy on their careers, as it often comes with increased daily responsibilities. Similarly, men can be better prepared, as they need to support their partners during pregnancy and share the responsibility of managing household duties.

Government Policy

To address the challenges of late marriage, the government should implement policies that provide financial and social support to couples. Targeted tax benefits, such as childbirth rebates for parents over a certain age and marriage allowances, would help alleviate the financial burden of raising children later in life (Government Digital Service, 2017). Additionally, public education initiatives, such as seminars and support groups for late-marriage couples, can reduce societal stigma and promote understanding of delayed marriage (Kathleen, 2021). To address reproductive concerns, the government should consider subsidizing or providing free oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing) and expanding access to assisted reproductive technologies (ART), including IVF and ICSI, through public healthcare. These policies would support individuals in making informed decisions about marriage and childbearing, addressing both financial and reproductive challenges linked to late marriage (KL Fertility Centre, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design. The said design is the most suitable because it enables

researchers to explore and analyze the intended problems encountered by the informants (Taylor et al., 2016). It allows the researchers to have an in-depth understanding of the various issues explored or predicaments faced by Malaysians relating to the issue of late marriage in this era among Malaysian men and women. This allowed the researchers to gain insight into how the informants interpreted their experience, what meanings they attributed to it, and how it affected them. Additionally, this study used a case study approach to comprehend multifaceted issues informants encounter in various contexts.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study represents four informants. This total number of informants was determined and finalized using the saturation principle, which states that once the data was collected, no new themes or sub-themes were added to the existing data (Taylor et al., 2016). The informants are comprised of 2 Malaysian females and 2 Malaysian males who are categorized as those beyond the ideal age of marriage.

Table I Demographic Profile of the Informants

Informants' Demogra-phy	Ariana	Bhanavi	Chen	Dani
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	36	35	35	35
State of origin	Pahang, Malaysia	Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia	Selangor, Malaysia	Sabah, Malaysia
State of residence	Selangor, Malaysia	Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia	Selangor, Malaysia	Sabah, Malaysia
Ethnic group	Malay	Indian	Chinese	Malay
Religion	Islam	Hinduism	Buddhism	Islam
Level of education	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Diploma	Master's Degree
Field of expertise	Manage-ment	Manage-ment	Manage-ment	Architecture
Current occupation	Deputy director	Senior manager	Business owner	Department officer
Years of service	11 years	10 years	3 years	10 years
Sector	Government	Private	Private	Government
Range of income per month	MYR4,851 - MYR10,970	MYR4,851 - MYR10,970	MYR4,851 - MYR10,970	MYR4,851 - MYR10,970

Table I shows the demographic profile of the four informants in this study which reveals diverse backgrounds in gender, age, state of origin and residence, ethnicity, religion, education level, field of expertise, occupation, years of service, occupational sector, and range of monthly income. The sample consists of two women (Ariana and Bhanavi) and two men (Chen and Dani), all in their mid-30s, aged 35 to 36. Geographically, Ariana is originally from Pahang but currently resides in Selangor, while Bhanavi and Dani remain in their home states, Negeri Sembilan and Sabah, respectively. Chen, a native of Selangor, also resides there. Regarding ethnicity and religion, Ariana and Dani are Malay and Muslim, Bhanavi is Indian and Hindu, and Chen is Chinese and Buddhist. Their educational backgrounds vary, i.e., Ariana holds a bachelor's degree, Bhanavi has a master's

degree, Chen has a diploma, and Dani has a master’s degree. Professionally, they are engaged in different fields, i.e., Ariana works in professional management as a deputy director, Bhanavi in management as a senior manager, Chen in event management as a business owner, and Dani in architecture as an officer in a government department. Their lengths of service also differ, with Chen having 3 years of experience, Bhanavi and Dani having 10 years, and Ariana having a service period of 10 years. Ariana and Dani work in the public sector, while Bhanavi and Chen are in the private sector. All four informants fall within the monthly income range of MYR4,851 to MYR10,970 (the middle-income group).

Data Collection Procedure

Based on their available time, the informants were free to choose the location, date, and time of the interviews. The interviews were usually conducted in relaxed settings, like cozy cafés or comfortable lounge areas, creating a welcoming atmosphere for open conversation. Before the start of each interview session, the researchers distributed the participant information sheet and consent form to all informants so that they could fully comprehend the nature, objectives, and extent of the research. It also helped them develop some topics to discuss during the interviews. They were assured that the information gathered in the field would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes and that they could opt out at any time.

The interview protocol was based on the issue of late marriage, which was classified as closed-ended and open-ended. The demographic information of the informants, such as their gender, age, place of origin, place of residence, ethnic group, religion, level of education, field of expertise, current occupation, year of service, occupational sector, range of monthly income, and work experience was primarily included in the closed-ended questions. Meanwhile, the open-ended questions are designed to extract information that would answer this study’s objectives, i.e., impacts of late marriage on Malaysian men and women. During the interviews, the researchers used audio recorders to capture the essential details the informants shared. However, the audio recorders were only used with the informants’ permission. Fortunately, all of the informants agreed to it. The interviews were conducted in English and the informants’ native languages to facilitate storytelling and the collection of research findings. Most of the interviews were conducted for an average of one hour.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection process was completed, the researchers transcribed all the raw audio data into written transcripts. It was done in a verbatim manner. As a result, the transcripts of all four informants totaled up to 80 pages. Then, NVivo 1.6 software was used to code all of the written transcripts. To elucidate the issues being studied, thematic analysis was used to systematically analyze the data until themes were created (Creswell, 2013). The coding system was extremely useful in categorizing and linking the themes until it made sense of the data and analyzed it to understand the informants’ issues related to late marriage.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

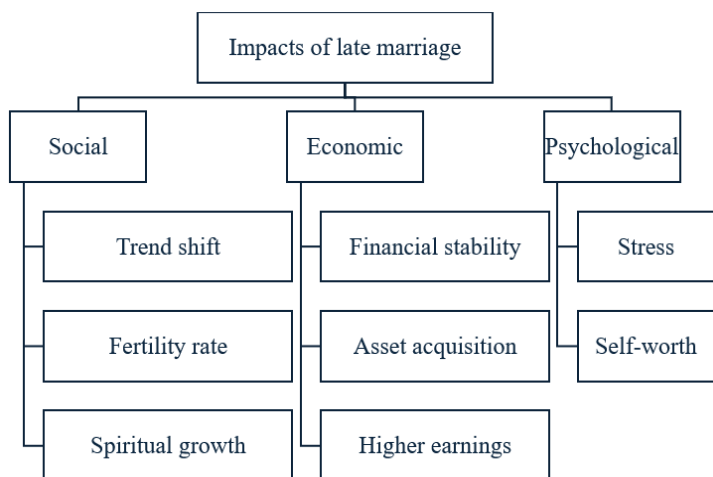


Fig. 1 Impacts of late marriage

Based on Figure 1, this study revealed three critical themes regarding the impacts of late marriage experienced by the informants. The three themes are social, economic, and psychological. The sub-themes for social impacts are trend shift, fertility rate, and spiritual growth. The sub-themes for economic impacts are financial stability, asset acquisition, and higher earnings. Finally, the sub-themes for psychological impact are stress and self-worth.

Social Impacts

The rising trend of late marriage is reshaping various social dynamics, influencing shifts in traditional norms, fertility rates, and spiritual growth. The following paragraphs will discuss such issues in detail.

Trend Shift: Different generations have varying perspectives on late marriage. Many in the present generation view marriage as a necessity, while some do not. Males often adopt a realistic attitude, seeing marriage primarily as a legal and stable arrangement, whereas females approach it more emotionally, valuing shared happiness and support. Both genders recognize that late marriage can foster greater responsibility. Modern individuals often see marriage as essential for companionship and emotional support, contrasting with older generations, who regarded marriage more as a societal custom or obligation. This shift reflects broader changes in values and priorities regarding relationships. One of the informants, Dani (pseudonym), aged 35 years old and has gone through such a circumstance, narrated the following:

“Yes, younger generation now plan and think carefully before getting married. Marriage is no longer just about having a big and fancy wedding ceremony with relatives and friends. They focus more on affordability and how they prefer to spend their money. Many now prioritize taking couple trips over hosting a wedding dinner.”

Another informant, Bhanavi (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated as follows:

“Due to the trend shifts of accepting later marriage in society, this greatly has influenced my decision to marry later.”

Marriage rates have been falling as society values personal freedom and individual goals over family traditions. This is aligned with the findings observed by Anukriti and Dasgupta (2017) and Omar and Jaafar (2024). Social factors like individualism, waning family-oriented ethos, and the decline of civil society contribute to the retreat from marriage and the growing class divide in marriage (Wilcox et al., 2015). This change reflects broader societal trends in which individual achievement precedes traditional family-building milestones. As a result, marriage, which was once seen as an early life goal, is not highly prioritized anymore.

Fertility Rate: Late marriage is one of the factors contributing to the decrease in population for several reasons. When people choose to marry later in life, they often delay starting families, which can lead to difficulties in pregnancy and fewer children being born overall. This delay can potentially reduce the total number of pregnancies and births in a particular population. Additionally, older parents may face increased health risks during pregnancy, which can further impact fertility rates. Societal factors, such as prioritizing education and career over family, play a role in the trend of late marriages, often leading to smaller family sizes or the decision not to have children. One of the informants, Dani (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated the following:

“As an unmarried person, I think marital status highlights essential trends in Malaysia’s demographics. People focus on education and careers before starting families, which can lead to fewer children being born. This results in a low fertility rate and an ageing population, with fewer young people in the workforce, putting pressure on social services and the economy.”

Another informant, Chen (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated as follows:

“In my point of view, if a woman postponing their marriage, giving birth will be a problem for them. For men, there is no problem.”

According to information from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024), Malaysia’s birth rate has been decreasing yearly. This trend raises concerns about the country’s population. Late marriage has been linked to declining fertility rates in many countries where delayed marriage and non-marriage have contributed to deficient

fertility levels. This is similar to the findings found by Gündoğdu and Bulut (2022), (Kathleen, 2021), Karamat (2016), and Saleem et al. (2015).

Spiritual Growth: Religious beliefs form a core part of people's identity. Late marriage influences individuals' religiosity and spirituality by giving them more time for self-reflection and exploring their beliefs. When people marry later, they often have the opportunity to develop their personal identities and spiritual practices independently before entering a partnership. This exploration period can lead to a deeper understanding of their faith and values, which they may bring into their marriage, fostering a shared spiritual journey with their partner. One of the informants, Bhanavi (pseudonym), a Hindu aged 35, talks about her spiritual journey due to late marriage as follows:

"Marrying later has influenced my spiritual practices and religious beliefs by providing me with more time for self-reflection and deepening my understanding of my faith; this built a foundation for my religion, and I got to know and study more about them. This allows me to approach marriage with a more mature perspective on how it aligns with my spiritual values and practices."

Another informant, Ariana (pseudonym), a Muslim aged 36 years old and has been gone through such a circumstance, narrated the following:

"Marrying later has deepened my spiritual practices, as I have had more time to reflect on my faith and how it guides my life decisions. I have focused more on personal growth and spiritual well-being, giving me a stronger sense of purpose and clarity about what I want in a partner and marriage."

Individuals embark on a spiritual journey as a means of self-discovery. This process often involves exploring personal values, beliefs, and life goals, which can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself (Wink, 2003; Ahmadi, 2000). As individuals navigate the societal expectations associated with late marriage, they may seek comfort and guidance in their religious beliefs, strengthening their spiritual engagement.

Economic Impacts

The trend of delaying marriage has imperative economic implications, particularly on individuals' financial stability, asset acquisition, and higher earnings. By prioritizing education and career advancement, those who marry later often achieve higher earning potential and accumulate more savings and assets independently. The following paragraphs will discuss such issues in detail.

Financial Stability: Late marriage can positively influence the financial stability of individuals for several reasons. Individuals who delay marriage have more chances to pursue their careers and accumulate assets and financial savings. This allows them to enter marriage with financial stability, reducing the possibility of financial problems that young couples commonly face. One of the informants, Bhanavi (pseudonym), mentioned the importance of financial stability before and after marriage as she narrated the following:

"Delaying marriage allows me to achieve financial independence and ensure I am fully self-sufficient and secure. For example, I have enough savings for future use, which provides a stronger foundation for a stable partnership after marriage. As you know, the cost of living nowadays is high."

This finding is aligned with Lehrer and Chen's (2013) study, which indicates that late marriage can positively contribute to financial stability, as individuals have more time to invest in education, career development, and personal financial growth.

Asset Acquisition: Aside from financial stability, late marriage has an imperative impact on individuals' asset acquisition too. People who marry later have more time to plan their finances, invest, and purchase their dream assets. In relation to this issue, one of the informants, Chen (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated as follows:

"If I got married late, my finances should already be stable. This means that I only have myself to spend my money on. I can purchase my dream house or car, or make investments anytime."

Another informant, Ariana (pseudonym), aged 36 years old and has been gone through similar circumstance, narrated the following:

“Delaying marriage has allowed me to focus on acquiring assets by purchasing a house independently. Without coordinating with a spouse or considering family expenditure, I could make decisions independently about the timing of my house purchase.”

The findings are aligned with a study done by Lafortune and Low (2017) which relates later marriages with greater asset accumulation. Individuals prioritizing purchasing property often delay marriage, as home ownership is perceived as a crucial step in securing a stable family life. Without the pressures of managing household expenses or joint financial commitments, individuals may have greater freedom to own assets.

Higher Earnings: Individuals delay their desire to get married because they want to develop their careers, which results in higher earnings. One of the informants, Chen (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated the following:

“Yeah, if you are late in getting married, you can focus on your career. You can start as an executive and get promoted to managerial or higher positions. You do not have to worry much; you can focus on your work and career. That means you are getting paid more.”

Another informant, Ariana (pseudonym), aged 36 years old, narrated as follows:

“Delaying marriage has positively impacted my earning potential. Without the immediate responsibilities of marriage and family, I have been able to focus on advancing my career, taking on new challenges, and even pursuing further education to enhance my skills.”

According to the informants' statements, individuals can upgrade their career portfolios if they delay their marriage. This is aligned with research done by Loughran and Zissimopoulos (2004, 2007) and Chandler et al. (1994), which shows that some people delay getting married early because they want to focus on their careers and education to improve their earnings.

Psychological Impacts

The rising trend of late marriage affects the informants' psychological well-being, influencing their stress experience and how they redefine self-worth. The following paragraphs will discuss such issues in detail.

Stress: Studies have shown that married couples are likelier to have happy lives than their single or divorced partners (Gündoğdu & Bulut, 2022). Late marriage also carries potential psychological challenges, particularly related to feelings of isolation and anxiety about ageing. For some individuals, societal pressure to marry by a certain age can cause stress and anxiety, leading to feelings of inadequacy or social exclusion. These anxieties can negatively impact mental health, contributing to conditions such as depression and anxiety. One of the informants, Chen (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated as follows:

“Once, I argued with my father because he kept pressuring me to find a girlfriend. However, during that time, I am still studying. I have no time to find a girlfriend. It is bothering me and making me feel stressed. Not only that, everybody had their partner during a big family dinner. Since I was the only single person at that table, they kept asking me if I had a girlfriend, when I wanted to get a girlfriend, and things like that. It is stressful!”

One of the informants, Bhanavi (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated the following:

“Marrying later has led to perceptions of being unconventional or non-traditional by my relatives, which has sometimes caused pressure.”

According to the informants, societal pressure to marry can be a substantial source of stress for those who choose to delay their marriage. Cultural norms, family expectations, and peer comparisons contribute to a sense of urgency or judgment, which can negatively affect psychological well-being. This is aligned with research by Gündoğdu and Bulut (2022) and Manjur et al. (2023), which shows that individuals who delay their marriages are prone to experience stress compared to their married counterparts (Coombs, 1991).

Self-Worth: Getting married later in life can have significant psychological impacts, particularly in enhancing an

individual's sense of self-worth. As people delay marriage, they spend more time developing their careers, personal interests, and social networks. Some people choose to delay marriage because they feel they are not quite ready to handle the responsibilities that come with it or they deeply value their freedom and independence. In that case, delaying marriage can help somebody gain confidence and clearly understand their needs and goals. One of the informants, Chen (pseudonym), aged 35 years old, narrated the following:

“Okay, in my opinion, by delaying my marriage, I can increase my self-worth because I can focus on my career and identity. I think there is more value in that.”

One of the informants, Ariana (pseudonym), aged 36 years old, narrated as follows:

“I have been able to reflect on what I truly want in a relationship and develop a stronger sense of self-worth. This has led to increased emotional stability and confidence.”

Self-worth in any person can be increased according to the informant's statement. The psychological impact of getting married later can ultimately enhance self-worth by promoting personal growth, resilience, and a more profound sense of self-determination which led to positive psychological well-being (Karamat, 2016).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, marriage is an essential social institution that forms the basis of family structure. It binds individuals into a family unit that supports its members, educates children, and imparts values and culture. Family institutions play a crucial role in ensuring societal stability. However, in recent times, many individuals are opting to marry later in life. The primary objective of this study is to analyse the impacts of delayed marriages among Malaysian men and women. Social, economic, and psychological aspects have been identified as the recognized impacts of late marriage among both men and women. This shift has had positive and negative effects on their lives, and late marriage has become an imperative issue impacting population growth, trend shift, and stressful life. However, it is also intriguing to note that it offers specific positive implications such as financial stability, asset acquisition, higher earnings, self-worth, and spiritual growth. Speaking of the impacts, it is recommended that discussions be held to address the conflict between modern values and societal expectations surrounding the issue of late marriage in Malaysia. This can be facilitated through workshops or community forums that enable individuals or experts to share experiences and strategies to address late marriage's social, economic, and psychological impacts to create more holistic societal progress.

While this qualitative study offers valuable insights into the phenomenon of late marriage in Malaysia, it has limitations. The research is mostly based on in-depth interviews that focus on personal stories. These stories are very rich in context, but they may only show a small part of the effects of marriage later in life on different groups of people. Future studies could consider incorporating quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the prevalence associated with late marriage, especially in the case of Malaysia.

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