

Social Inclusion: The Decrease in Marriage Rates in Indonesia can be Ascribed to The Enduring Presence of a Patriarchal Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the decline in marriage rates related to the influence of patriarchal culture on society in Indonesia. The influence of patriarchal culture, men are referred to as the dominant party to influence individual views on marriage through aspects of social and family life. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and utilizes demographic data from the X trend and marriage decline data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) to identify the primary factors contributing to gender inequality, social norms, and economic instability that influence the decision to marry, particularly among women. Research indicates that the prevalence of patriarchal culture within influential social systems has a significant influence on the low rates of marriage. The study further advocates for social inclusion in addressing these difficulties by proposing the implementation of more comprehensive strategies to counteract patriarchal norms and promote the long-term viability of marriage in Indonesian society. Additionally, it underscores the significance of gender equality in this context

Keywords: *Patriarchal Culture, Marriage Rates, Gender Inequality, Marriage Decline*

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal culture has been an integral part of social life in Indonesia for centuries. This patriarchal system places men in dominant positions in the family and society, while women are often positioned as subordinates (Anggraeni & Syahidin, 2024). One of the real impacts of this patriarchal culture is the low marriage rate in Indonesia, where many women choose to postpone or avoid marriage (Intan and Machdalena, 2021). The figures show that social pressure to carry out the traditional role of women as housewives is still strong in many communities. This condition triggers significant gender imbalances in various aspects of social life.

The decline in marriage rates in Indonesia has been a growing phenomenon over the past decade. This phenomenon is influenced by several factors, including economic instability, increasing education among women, and changing views on marriage (Anggraeni & Syahidin, 2024). Women with higher education tend to delay marriage because they have wider access to the world of work and public life. This raises concerns about the sustainability of the institution of marriage in the future.

In addition, gender inequality in society is also an important factor influencing women's decisions to postpone marriage. A strong patriarchal culture has formed the expectation

that women should act as housewives and take care of the household (Halizah and Faralita, 2023). In this context, women who want to pursue a career or further education are often faced with social pressure to get married immediately (Raihana, 2024). This pressure creates a dilemma for women who want to gain freedom in their lives. This results in more and more women choosing to postpone or even avoid marriage.

Economic factors also play a significant role in the decline in marriage rates. Economic instability, especially among the younger generation, has caused many people to feel unprepared to marry and build a household (Putra et al., 2023). The increasing cost of marriage, as well as economic challenges after marriage, are among the main reasons for delaying marriage (Adhani and Aripudin, 2024). As a result, many women feel that marriage will add to their economic burden, especially in conditions where men are still seen as the main breadwinners.

Changes in social norms also impact women's decisions to marry. More and more women are choosing to pursue education and careers, rather than marrying at a young age (Hermambang et al., 2021). The norms that used to force women to marry at a young age are now starting to change along with the times. However, even though these norms are starting to change, patriarchal culture remains strong in many parts of Indonesia, influencing how women view marriage and their roles in it (Anggraeni and Syahidin, 2024).



Figure 1. Fluctuation in Marriage Rates (2011 – 2021)

Source: Databoks.com

The graph of the number of marriages in Indonesia from 2011 to 2021 shows a significant downward trend, especially after 2014. The sharp decline occurred in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but this decline also reflects deeper social changes. One of the main factors influencing the decline in marriage rates is the influence of a strong patriarchal culture in Indonesia, where women are faced with expectations related to domestic roles (Tuwu, 2018). This causes many women to delay marriage due to gender inequality and social pressure to fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers. In this paper, it is important to see the decline in marriage rates not only as an economic or health phenomenon, but also as a reflection of broader social imbalances resulting from a deep-seated patriarchal culture.

The discussion related to the decline in marriage rates in relation to patriarchal culture and social inclusion is very relevant. This decline is not only related to economic factors or the pandemic, but also the result of structural inequalities that affect women in making their life decisions (Fadhillah et al., 2024). According to Zuhri and Amalia (2022), in a society dominated by a patriarchal culture, marriage is often considered a social imperative for women, so many of them choose to postpone or avoid marriage because they do not want to be tied to a structure that restricts personal freedom and aspirations. Therefore, it is important to discuss this topic from a social inclusion perspective to understand how gender inequality affects marriage decisions and find more inclusive and equitable solutions for all individuals.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature review method to understand the factors that influence the decline in marriage rates in Indonesia, especially related to the influence of patriarchal culture. Literature review was chosen as a research method because it provides a comprehensive overview of previously researched topics and helps in formulating the relationship between patriarchal culture, gender inequality, and marriage decisions. This study focuses on collecting secondary data obtained from various trusted sources, including reports from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), scientific journal articles, and academic books relevant to the research topic.

Secondary data from BPS is used to analyze the trend of declining marriage rates in Indonesia over the past decade, specifically data from 2010 to 2020. This data helps identify demographic changes related to marriage and understand the contribution of economic and social factors in marriage decisions. In addition to BPS data, journal articles focusing on gender inequality, patriarchal culture, and socioeconomic impacts on marriage are also analyzed to enrich the understanding of this phenomenon.

The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis. Data obtained from secondary sources are categorized based on key themes related to the topic, such as patriarchal culture, economic instability, and changing social norms. The articles and literature analyzed reveal key themes that influence women's decisions to delay marriage, including social pressures derived from patriarchal norms and modern women's career aspirations. This analysis helps identify recurring patterns across the literature, which are then used to support the arguments in this study.

In addition, secondary data from previous studies are also used to support the understanding of how gender inequality and other economic factors influence marriage decisions across demographic groups in Indonesia. The use of secondary data helps researchers gain a broad picture of social trends and changes occurring in society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This culture, which places men as leaders in the household, ignores women's aspirations, which ultimately leads to delaying marriage. Research by Aryanti et al. (2014), found that the influence of patriarchal culture is a significant factor in the decline in marriage rates in Indonesia. Women feel trapped in traditional roles that limit their freedom to pursue a career or continue their education. This has a direct impact on the decline in marriage rates, especially among highly educated women.

Gender inequality also plays a role in low marriage rates. A study by Salwa et al. (2023) showed that women who are under pressure from patriarchal culture tend to reject marriage because they feel they have no autonomy in the relationship. This inequality creates an imbalance in the marriage relationship, which often makes women reluctant to enter into marriage. In addition, economic factors play a significant role in the decline in marriage rates. As Falconier and Jackson (2020) point out, many couples are postponing marriage due to economic uncertainty and high living costs. The cost of marriage, including traditional ceremonies and parties, is increasingly burdensome for many young families, so marriages are postponed until economic conditions are more stable (Barus and Fadillah, 2023). This makes the situation worse for women, who feel that they must bear the economic burden if they marry.

Changes in social views also influence women's decisions to marry. A more modern global culture and access to social media have changed women's views on marriage. Many women now see marriage as a choice, not an obligation, and prefer to pursue careers and education (Juliawati, 2017). This phenomenon is especially visible among the younger generation, who are increasingly exposed to global culture. The study also found significant differences between urban and rural areas in terms of marriage rates. In urban areas, women have greater access to education and employment opportunities, which makes them delay marriage longer. On the other hand, in rural areas, traditional norms are still strong, which causes marriage rates to remain high.

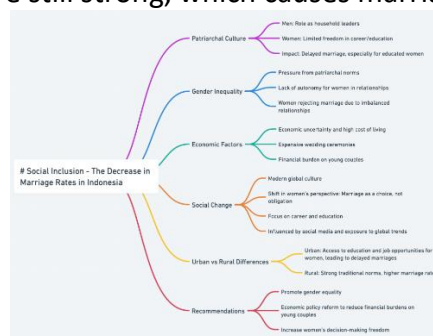


Figure 2. Research Results Framework

Source: Analysis 2024

The framework in the figure shows the main factors influencing the decline in marriage rates in Indonesia, with a focus on how patriarchal culture contributes to this phenomenon. In a patriarchal society, men are generally positioned as household leaders, while women have little freedom in terms of career and education, mostly focused on domestic work (Putri et al., 2024). As a result, many highly educated women

choose to delay marriage due to social pressure from patriarchal norms that require them to play traditional roles. This gender inequality is a major cause of delayed marriage for women who feel they have no autonomy in their relationships.

Economic factors are also an important element that plays a role in the decline in marriage rates. Economic uncertainty, high living costs, and expensive weddings make many young couples hesitate to get married. The financial burden faced by these young couples makes the situation worse, with many choosing to focus on financial stability first before considering marriage. This condition makes marriage no longer a top priority for the younger generation who want to achieve financial independence before getting involved in a long-term relationship.

In addition, social changes influenced by modern global culture and social media have also caused a shift in women's views on marriage. Many women now see marriage as a choice, rather than a social obligation, and are more focused on their careers and education. In urban areas, better access to education and employment opportunities allow women to delay marriage longer, while in rural areas, traditional norms are still very strong. Recommendations emerging from this framework include the importance of promoting gender equality, economic policy reforms to reduce the financial burden on young couples, and increasing women's freedom in decision-making regarding marriage.

Table 1. Main Factors and Impact on Marriage Rates

Key Factors	Impact on Marriage Rates	Source
Patriarchal Culture	Delaying marriage among highly educated women	Musahwi et al. (2022)
Gender Inequality	Women reject marriage due to lack of autonomy	Isamah et al. (2024)
Economic Factors	Postponing marriage due to economic uncertainty and high cost of living	A'lauddin et al. (2023)
Changes in Social Views	Marriage is seen as a choice, not a social obligation	Oktarina et al. (2015)
Differences Between Urban and Rural Areas	Urban: delaying marriage; Rural: marriage rates remain high	Pamessangi et al. (2024)

Source: Secondary Data Analysis (2024)

The decline in marriage rates in Indonesia can be attributed to various factors, but the strong influence of the deeply rooted patriarchal culture is one of the main causes. Patriarchal culture places men as the dominant leaders of the household, while women are expected to fulfill traditional roles as wives and housewives. This social structure limits women from making free decisions about marriage, careers, and education. In the context of a patriarchal culture, educated women often feel oppressed by traditional norms that require them to play domestic roles, so many of them choose to postpone or even avoid marriage altogether (Musahwi et al., 2022).

In addition to social pressures, patriarchal culture also reinforces gender inequality in marital relationships. Women often feel they lack autonomy in decision-making, which causes many of them to feel uncomfortable or insecure in the institution of marriage. This is reflected in the low marriage rate among highly educated women, as they tend to avoid relationships that stifle their career aspirations and independence (Isamah et al., 2024). This inequality creates significant imbalances in marital relationships, where women often feel that they will not get the freedom or support needed to pursue their personal goals in a marriage context dominated by patriarchal norms.

The importance of social inclusion in this discussion cannot be ignored. Social inclusion refers to efforts to create a more just and equal society, where all individuals, including women, have the same rights and freedoms in making decisions that affect their lives, including marriage (Hazmi and Nafidah, 2021). By promoting gender equality, women can more freely choose whether to marry without pressure from deeply rooted patriarchal norms (Alfaizi, 2022). In addition, economic and social reforms that support women's inclusion in the workforce and education can help increase women's independence and reduce their dependence on marriage as the only path to economic security.

In an effort to create a more inclusive society, it is important to understand how patriarchal culture not only influences the decline in marriage rates but also creates wider inequality. Strong social inclusion can be a solution in addressing this gender inequality by giving women more choices and freedom in determining their life path, including in terms of marriage (Yaneri and Deswanti, 2021). Overall, this sub-chapter emphasizes the importance of social inclusion in addressing the declining marriage rate in Indonesia which is influenced by a deep-rooted patriarchal culture. This study shows that social inclusion and promotion of gender equality are important steps in addressing this problem, while facilitating a more just and equal society in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the decline in marriage rates in Indonesia is largely influenced by the patriarchal culture that is still strong in society. Patriarchal culture, which places men as leaders in the household and limits the role of women, creates significant gender inequality. This causes many women, especially those who are highly educated and have wider access to careers, to choose to delay or avoid marriage. Social pressure to carry out traditional roles as wives and mothers also influences women's decisions regarding marriage. In addition, economic instability plays a role in this phenomenon. The high cost of marriage and the financial burden that must be borne after marriage are the main factors that cause many young couples to hesitate to get married. Social changes influenced by globalization and social media have also caused a shift in women's views on marriage, where more and more women see marriage as a choice, not an obligation. Therefore, it is important to implement social inclusion strategies and promote gender equality so that women have freedom in decision-making, as well as economic policy reforms to reduce the financial burden on young couples.

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