

Late Marriage (Abstract)

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In the absence of widespread use of contraception a shift in the timing of childbirth toward older ages could be an important means in the attempt to bring about a decline in the birth and growth rates of the country. One way to affect delays in childbearing and thus to curb population growth is to raise the age at marriage. The effectiveness of this procedure has been well demonstrated in the demographic history of Ireland.

Early marriage lengthens the childbearing period of a woman, permits some births to occur which otherwise mortality of young women would prevent, and compresses the time span (generation) needed by a mother to replace herself with a baby girl. The consequence of all these factors is an increase in the overall growth rate of the population.¹ Agarwala has noted that if Indian women would delay their marriages until they reach the age of 19 or 20, the birth rate of India would decline by some 30 per cent.²

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¹ Ansley J. Coale and C. Y. Tye, "The Significance of Age Patterns of Fertility in High Fertility Populations," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 4 (October, 1961).

² S. N. Agarwala "Effect of a Rise in Female Marriage Age on Birth Rate in India," United Nations, *World Population Conference, 1965*, Vol. II: "Fertility, Family Planning, Mortality." (New York: United Nations, 1967), p. 172.

Studies undertaken in the Philippines by Concepcion and others have discovered that women who marry at a young age tend to have substantially larger families than do women who marry at an older age. In the late 1950's the number of children born to mothers who had married in their teens exceeded the number of children born to mothers who had married after passing their 20th birthdays by about 39 per cent.³

Over the last two decades and a half median age at first marriage for women in the Philippines has followed a rising trend. Data from Cagayan de Oro indicate that between 1942 and 1962 median age at first marriage of women had increased from 19.1 to 21.6 years. Concepcion and Regudo have shown similar trends for other parts of the country.⁴ Desire for higher education and greater labor force participation of women may have been the main reasons underlying these developments.

To promote the practice of late marriage in the Philippines, Madigan has suggested a government-sponsored moti-

³ Mercedes B. Concepcion, "Fertility Differences Among Married Women in the Philippines," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Dept. of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1963), p. 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*; Adriana Cruz-Regudo, "The Effect of Age at Marriage in the Fertility of Ever Married Women in the Ilocos, Central Luzon, and Bicol Regions, 1960," *The Philippine Statistician*, Vol. XIV (December, 1965), p. 265.

vation campaign for delaying marriage until young people have secured an adequate economic base for the establishment of a family. Legislation making 21 years the minimum legal age for women to marry may be a feasible step in this direction. Another possible avenue may be the introduction of an intra-country 'peace corps' for young single persons, who would be required to remain single during the time period of their service.⁵

Such measures, if properly implemented, could be a suitable alternative to the use of contraceptives in a country like the Philippines, where the birth rate is excessively high, and where religious and cultural factors make the utilization of other factors of birth regulation for the near future rather unlikely.

⁵ Francis C. Madigan, S.J., "Population and Levels of Living in the Rural Philippines," *Human Factors in the Philippine Rural Development*. (Pasay City: Modern Press, 1967)