

Temporal Changes in Retreat from Marriage in Asia

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Original Article

Abstract

Background and Aim: Marriage has historically been a cornerstone of societal organization in Asia; however, recent decades have witnessed a significant "retreat from marriage," reflected in delayed marriage and rising proportions of individuals who remain never married into midlife. This study aims to analyze the retreat from marriage in Asia, focusing on changes in its prevalence and identifying the socio-economic and cultural driving forces behind this trend.

Data and Method: Data were sourced from various United Nations agencies, covering 50 Asian countries from 1970 to 2020. The study applies event history analysis techniques. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates were used to examine the probability of countries remaining in a state of universal marriage over time. Discrete-time hazard models were estimated to identify factors associated with transitions away from universal marriage.

Findings: The findings show that 52% of countries experienced a retreat from marriage among women, compared to 46% for men. Urbanization, predominant religion, and regional differences significantly influenced marriage trends, with notable gender disparities. The study highlights the relevance of gender role and modernization theories in understanding contemporary marriage trends.

Conclusion: By providing a broad comparative perspective on the retreat from marriage in Asia over five decades, this study offers insights that can inform policymakers regarding the cultural, geographic, and socio-economic dynamics affecting marriage patterns and family structures.

Keywords: Asia, Event history analysis, Gender, Marriage, Modernization, Religion.

Key Message: The findings underscore the need for context-sensitive analyses and policies that recognize both structural pressures and enduring social norms in shaping marriage behavior in Asia. Consequently, effective policymaking requires designing gender-specific interventions while accounting for the strong moderating role of religious and regional family norms.

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Introduction

The institution of marriage has historically been a pivotal element of societal organization, deeply influenced by cultural, religious, and social norms ([Thornton et al., 2007](#)). Across many cultures, marriage has traditionally been perceived as a universal practice and a cornerstone of family life ([Goode, 1963](#)). However, in recent decades, Asia has witnessed significant transformations in marital trends, leading to what is now referred to as the “retreat from marriage” ([Jones, 2007](#)). This term denotes a departure from the traditional expectation of universal marriage, characterized by delayed marriage, increased singlehood, and rising divorce rates.

Historically, marriage in Asian societies was nearly universal, driven by strong cultural expectations and economic necessities. In many parts of Asia, social norms placed considerable emphasis on family formation and continuity. Marriage was not merely a personal milestone but a societal expectation, often linked to social status and economic stability ([Goode, 1963](#)).

Nevertheless, the last few decades have seen profound socio-economic changes that have reshaped traditional marriage patterns. One of the most significant factors contributing to the retreat from marriage is the increased availability of educational opportunities. As more individuals, particularly women, gain access to higher education, the age at marriage tends to increase. Education leads to greater career aspirations and financial independence, which can delay or even reduce the likelihood of marriage ([Esteve et al., 2020](#)).

Urbanization is another critical factor. Rapid urban growth in many Asian countries has brought about significant changes in lifestyles and societal norms. Urban environments offer more opportunities for higher education and formal employment, which often lead to delayed marriage. Additionally, the high cost of living in urban areas can make marriage and family formation less financially feasible for young adults ([Jones, 2007](#)).

Evolving gender roles also play a crucial role. Traditional gender roles, which assigned men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, have been challenged by increasing gender equality. Women’s participation in the workforce and their pursuit of independent careers have shifted priorities, often leading to later marriage or the choice to remain single. This shift reflects a broader societal change toward individualism and personal fulfillment over traditional family roles ([Thornton et al., 2007](#)).

Religious and cultural factors continue to influence marriage patterns, although their impact varies across regions. For instance, in Bangladesh, traditional and religious values still uphold marriage as a societal norm ([Talukder et al., 2020](#)). Conversely, countries like Japan and South Korea are experiencing rapid secularization and changing cultural attitudes,

leading to a greater acceptance of alternative lifestyles such as cohabitation and singlehood ([Park, 1994](#); [Raymo et al., 2009](#)). In Iran, however, recent studies suggest that family values have also been undergoing change and marriage is increasingly being redefined beyond its traditional framework. In this shifting context, trust, emotional compatibility, and material conditions play an important role in marriage decisions ([Abbasi & Rezapour, 2025](#); [Karevani, 2026](#)).

Despite the growing body of research on the retreat from marriage, most studies have focused on specific regions or relatively short timeframes, which limits their broader applicability. Many existing studies have concentrated on East Asia, particularly Japan, South Korea, and China, highlighting trends in delayed marriage and declining fertility ([Jones, 2007](#); [Esteve et al., 2020](#)). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that cover the entire continent of Asia over an extended period. This gap in the literature calls for a more holistic and inclusive analysis that considers the diverse contexts within Asia.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the retreat from marriage across Asia during the past five decades. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following key questions: 1). How has the prevalence of the retreat from marriage among men and women in Asia changed over time? 2). What are the primary socio-economic and cultural driving forces behind this trend?

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature, both methodologically and substantively. Methodologically, it fills a critical gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of marriage patterns across the entire continent of Asia, covering an extensive period from 1970 to 2019. By using robust statistical methods, such as Kaplan-Meier survival estimates and discrete-time hazard models, the study aims to offer a deeper understanding of the structural and cultural factors driving the retreat from marriage, with a specific focus on gender differences. Substantively, the study's findings have significant implications for policymakers. Understanding the gender-specific dynamics of marriage retreat is crucial for designing effective social policies and interventions that support family structures and societal well-being.

The paper is organized as follows: The next section provides a detailed review of the theoretical and empirical literature on marriage patterns and the retreat from marriage in Asia. Following that, the methodology section outlines the data sources, statistical techniques, and analytical framework used in the study. The results section presents the findings from the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates and discrete-time hazard models, highlighting key trends and patterns. The discussion section interprets these findings in the context of existing theories and previous research. Finally, the conclusion section summarizes the key insights, discusses policy implications, and suggests directions for future research.

Empirical Background

Empirical research on marriage patterns in Asia provides substantial evidence of shifting family dynamics across the continent. While the theoretical approaches that underpin these changes are explored in the subsequent section, the following empirical landscape reveals that the retreat from marriage is a multifaceted process. This section highlights selected findings that illustrate the diverse patterns and socio-cultural influences shaping marriage in Asia.

Regional Variations: Research indicates stark differences in marriage patterns across Asia. For instance, East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea have experienced dramatic increases in the age at first marriage and rising rates of singlehood ([Raymo et al., 2009](#); [Park, 1994](#)). In contrast, South Asian countries like India and Bangladesh still exhibit relatively high rates of early and universal marriage, although this trend is changing gradually ([Scott et al., 2020](#); [Talukder et al., 2020](#)).

Gender Differences: The retreat from marriage affects men and women differently. Studies show that women's increasing educational attainment and labor force participation are significant factors in delayed marriage and singlehood. For instance, in Iran and China, the rise in women's education has been linked to later ages at marriage and higher rates of singlehood ([Torabi et al., 2013](#); [Yu & Xie, 2015](#)). Men, on the other hand, may face different pressures and expectations regarding marriage, which are often heavily influenced by socio-economic status and employment stability.

Cultural and Religious Influences: Cultural norms and religious beliefs continue to play a crucial role in marriage patterns. In Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, traditional values still strongly support marriage, although economic and educational factors are slowly driving changes ([Jones, 2007](#)). In more secular contexts, such as urban areas in Japan and South Korea, there is a greater acceptance of alternative family structures and lifestyles, including cohabitation and singlehood ([Raymo et al., 2009](#); [Park, 1994](#)).

Economic Factors: Economic conditions significantly impact marriage decisions. In rapidly developing economies, the high cost of living and the demands of urban life contribute to delayed marriage. For example, in Pacific Asia, high housing costs and career pressures are major factors in declining marriage rates ([Jones, 2007](#)).

Overall, the retreat from marriage in Asia is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a range of socio-economic, cultural, and gender-specific factors. Existing studies provide valuable insights but remain fragmented, often focusing on individual countries or single dimensions of change. What is needed—and what this study aims to provide—is a

comprehensive, comparative analysis across Asia that integrates these diverse influences over the past five decades.

Theoretical Considerations

The study of marriage patterns and their evolution is grounded in several theoretical frameworks. Key perspectives include modernization theory, role specialization theory, marriage market theory, gender revolution theory, and rational choice theory.

Modernization Theory posits that socio-economic development leads to profound changes in social norms and behaviors, including marriage patterns. With rapid urbanization, improved education, and expanding economic opportunities, traditional norms weaken, leading to delayed marriage and increased singlehood ([Goode, 1963](#)). Therefore, the retreat from marriage is more likely to occur in urbanized and developed societies.

Role Specialization Theory suggests that traditional gender roles within marriage—men as breadwinners and women as homemakers—are becoming less relevant as gender equality increases. As women attain financial independence and career opportunities, the economic necessity of marriage diminishes, leading to delayed or avoided marriage ([Becker, 1991](#)). Consequently, the retreat from marriage is more prevalent in societies with high levels of female education and greater participation in the labour market.

Marriage Market Theory suggests that marriage decisions are shaped by the availability and desirability of potential partners within the local marriage market. Individuals typically seek partners who match their socio-economic status, education level, and other desirable traits. When suitable partners are scarce, this can lead to delayed marriage or increased singlehood. Conversely, a well-balanced market with a high availability of desirable partners facilitates higher marriage rates. Essentially, the dynamics of the local marriage market, including the economic conditions and social attributes of potential partners, play a crucial role in shaping marriage patterns ([Kalmijn, 2013](#)).

Gender Revolution Theory posits that societal expectations and roles significantly influence individual choices about family formation ([Eagly & Wood, 1999](#)). It emphasizes shifting gender dynamics and the renegotiation of roles within the domestic sphere. As societies move towards more egalitarian norms, traditional expectations of marriage are challenged, thereby contributing to changing marriage patterns and the retreat from marriage ([Goldscheider et al., 2015](#)).

Rational Choice Theory posits that individuals make marriage decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. In contexts where economic opportunities and personal aspirations are high, the perceived benefits of remaining single or delaying marriage may outweigh traditional

institutional incentives to marry ([Oppenheimer, 1988](#)). Therefore, the retreat from marriage is a rational response to changing structural constraints and opportunities.

Table 1. *Application of Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding the Retreat from Marriage*

Theory	Factor	Description
Marriage Market		
	• Sex ratio	An imbalanced sex ratio can lead to fewer marriages due to the scarcity of suitable partners.
Modernization		
	• Urbanization & Education	Urbanization and higher education lead to socio-economic development and changes in social norms, weakening traditional marital expectations and leading to fewer marriages.
	• Religion	Religious beliefs can either uphold traditional marriage patterns or lead to fewer marriages in more secular societies.
Role Specialization		
	• Men's labor force participation	High participation of men in the labor force can negatively impact the retreat from marriage by stabilizing their breadwinning role.
	• Women's labor force participation	High participation of women in the labor force leads to financial independence, resulting in fewer marriages.
Rational Choice		
	• Economic development	High economic opportunities lead to fewer marriages as individuals prioritize personal and career goals.
	• Economic stability	High economic stability leads to fewer marriages as individuals prioritize personal and career goals.
Gender Role		
	• Gender equality in education	High gender equality in education shifts norms towards more egalitarian roles, leading to fewer marriages, particularly among women.
	• Gender equality in politics	High gender equality in politics supports and leads to changes in traditional marital expectations align with shifts away from marriage, particularly among women.
	• Gender equality in labor market	High gender equality in labor market leads to fewer marriages by increasing financial independence of women and reducing the breadwinning quality in men.

Note. Compiled by the author based on the theoretical and empirical literature review.

Together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate that marriage behaviour is influenced by structural conditions, cultural norms, gender dynamics, and individual choices. By applying multiple complementary theories, this study can better capture the diverse forces shaping marriage patterns and avoid overlooking important explanatory factors. Table 1 summarizes the relevance of these factors to delayed marriage and increased celibacy through the lens of various theoretical frameworks and the results of empirical studies.

Method and Data

The data for this study are drawn from various United Nations agencies and the Pew Research Center, covering 50 Asian countries, states, and territories recognized by the United Nations ([United Nations Statistics Division, 2020](#)) from 1970 to 2020. The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure indicating whether a country has reached the threshold of the retreat from marriage. Following [Jones \(2010\)](#), this threshold is defined as fewer than 5% of the population aged 45–49 remaining never married. Countries that reach this threshold are coded as 1, while those that remain in the universal marriage state are coded as 0. Recent research (e.g., [Esteve et al., 2020](#)) has also applied the 45–49 age range, arguing that the likelihood of first marriages beyond this age threshold is relatively low. The data comes from the World Marriage Data provided by the [United Nations Population Division \(2019\)](#).

To analyze the transition to the state of the retreat from marriage among Asian countries, event history analysis is employed ([Allison, 2014](#)). Specifically, Kaplan-Meier survival estimates are used to assess the probability of remaining in the universal marriage state across five decades, with separate estimates calculated for men and women. The study period is divided into five decades intervals: 1970–1980, 1980–1990, 1990–2000, 2000–2010, and 2010–2020. This division was undertaken to account for and adjust for irregularities in year-to-year data availability.

The values for the proportion of never-married individuals aged 45–49 are missing in some intervals. It is assumed that these missing values remain below the 5% retreat threshold if the country has not yet entered the retreat state. Notably, only two countries—Iraq and Nepal—have reverted to a persistent universal marriage state after previously transitioning away from it. This treatment of missing values preserves information in the covariates and allows for the most effective use of the dataset. Furthermore, multiple imputation is used to avoid the listwise deletion of cases with missing values on the covariates, thereby maximizing the use of available information.

Table 2. Covariates Included in the Analysis in Relation with Marriage Theories

Theory	Factor	Variable
Marriage Market		
	• Sex ratio *	Sex ratio at age 15-49 (%)
Modernization		
	• Urbanization *	Urban population (%)
	• Education *	Male adult literacy rate (%)
		Female adult literacy rate (%)
		Male primary completion rate (%)
		Female primary completion rate (%)
		Male progression to secondary school (%)
		Female progression to secondary school (%)
	• Religion **	Muslim
		Christian
		Buddhist
		Unaffiliated
		Other
Role Specialization		
	• Men's labor force participation*	Male labor force participation rate (%)
		Male unemployment rate (%)
	• Women's labor force participation *	Female labor force participation rate (%)
		Female unemployment rate (%)
Rational Choice		
	• Economic development *	GDP per capita (Current US\$)
	• Economic stability *	Inflation, consumer prices (Annual %)
Gender Roles		
	• Gender equality in education *	School enrolment, gender parity index (GPI)
	• Gender equality in politics *	Seats held by women in national parliaments (%)
	• Gender equality in labor market *	Share of women in the labor force (%)
Region ***		
		Western Asia
		Central Asia
		Southern Asia
		Southeastern Asia
		Eastern Asia

Source: * [World Bank \(2020\)](#) ** [Pew Research Center \(2020\)](#) *** [United Nations Statistics Division \(2020\)](#)

Discrete-time hazard models are employed to identify the primary factors driving changes in the retreat from marriage. The models include all variables with Pearson correlation coefficients below 0.6 to avoid multicollinearity. Separate analyses are conducted for men and women using their respective datasets, which differ in terms of the total time at risk and, consequently, the values of the covariates. All statistical analyses are conducted using Stata 19.5.

Table 2 includes the covariates associated with the various theoretical perspectives. Geographic region is also included in the analysis, as it shapes marriage patterns through the complex interplay of socio-economic and cultural factors, resulting in varying regional marriage patterns.

Findings

First, the trend of retreat from marriage across Asia over the past five decades is examined. Next, descriptive statistics for the covariates are presented, and survival estimates for selected covariates are illustrated. Finally, the results of the multivariate discrete-time hazard models are reported.

The Kaplan-Meier survival estimates show that the retreat from marriage has become increasingly prevalent across Asia, albeit unevenly distributed. By 2020, 26 countries (52%) witnessed a retreat from marriage among women, whereas 23 countries (46%) experienced a similar trend among men (Figure 1). This indicates that the decline of universal marriage has progressed slightly further for women at the national level.

Moreover, the timing of this change differs by gender. For men, the most pronounced transition occurred between 1970 and 1980, with another noticeable rise during 2000–2010. Conversely, the retreat from marriage among women progressed more gradually in the earlier decades but accelerated during 1990–2000, which shows the steepest decline in survival probabilities.

Figure 2 presents maps of Asian countries experiencing male retreat from marriage over the past five decades, while Figure 3 displays the corresponding maps for women. Among men, the transition initiated in Western, Southern, and Southeastern Asia, spreading gradually eastward. It has scarcely occurred in the Central or parts of Western Asia. For women, however, the transition is visually manifest across a broader range of countries in Western Asia as well as in parts of Central Asia.

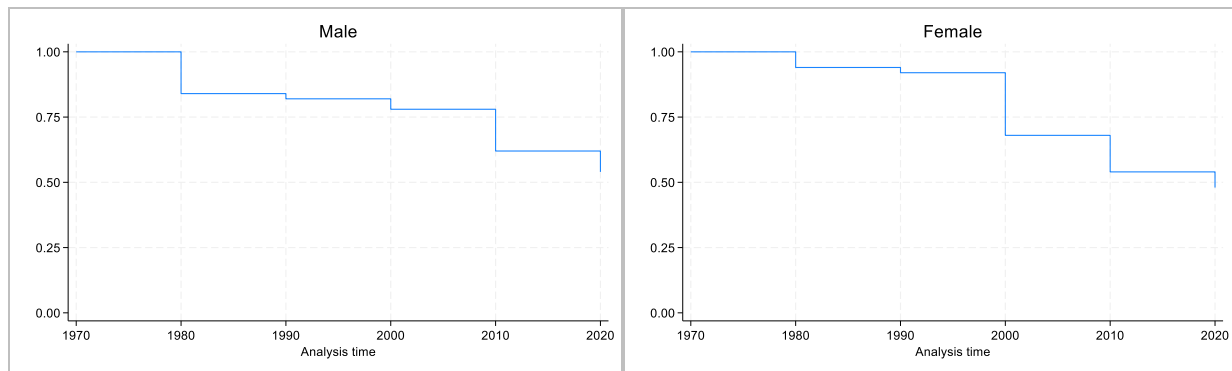


Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates of Male and Female Retreat from Marriage in Asian Countries, 1970–2020

As described in Table 3, the gender composition in the analyzed countries favors men, with a sex ratio of nearly 114 men per 100 women aged 15–49 in both the male and female samples. Approximately half of both the male and female populations reside in urban areas, and access to education has expanded significantly over time. While the gender gap in education persists, it diminishes progressively at higher educational levels. Islam is the predominant religion in the majority of these countries, with 60% of both men and women living in Muslim-majority countries.

Furthermore, the labor force participation rate is almost twice as high among men compared to women. Men are also less likely than women to be unemployed. Indicators of gender equality show that the gender gap in educational access is not substantial. However, women's access to political and economic opportunities remains significantly lower than that of men. Notably, these socioeconomic and demographic attributes remain highly consistent across both the male and female samples.

Geographically, approximately one-third of the population is located in Western Asia, followed by Southern and Southeastern Asia, with each region accounting for almost one-fifth of the total population. Eastern and Central Asian countries each constitute 10% of the aggregate population.



Note: Darker shade represents countries experiencing retreat from marriage.

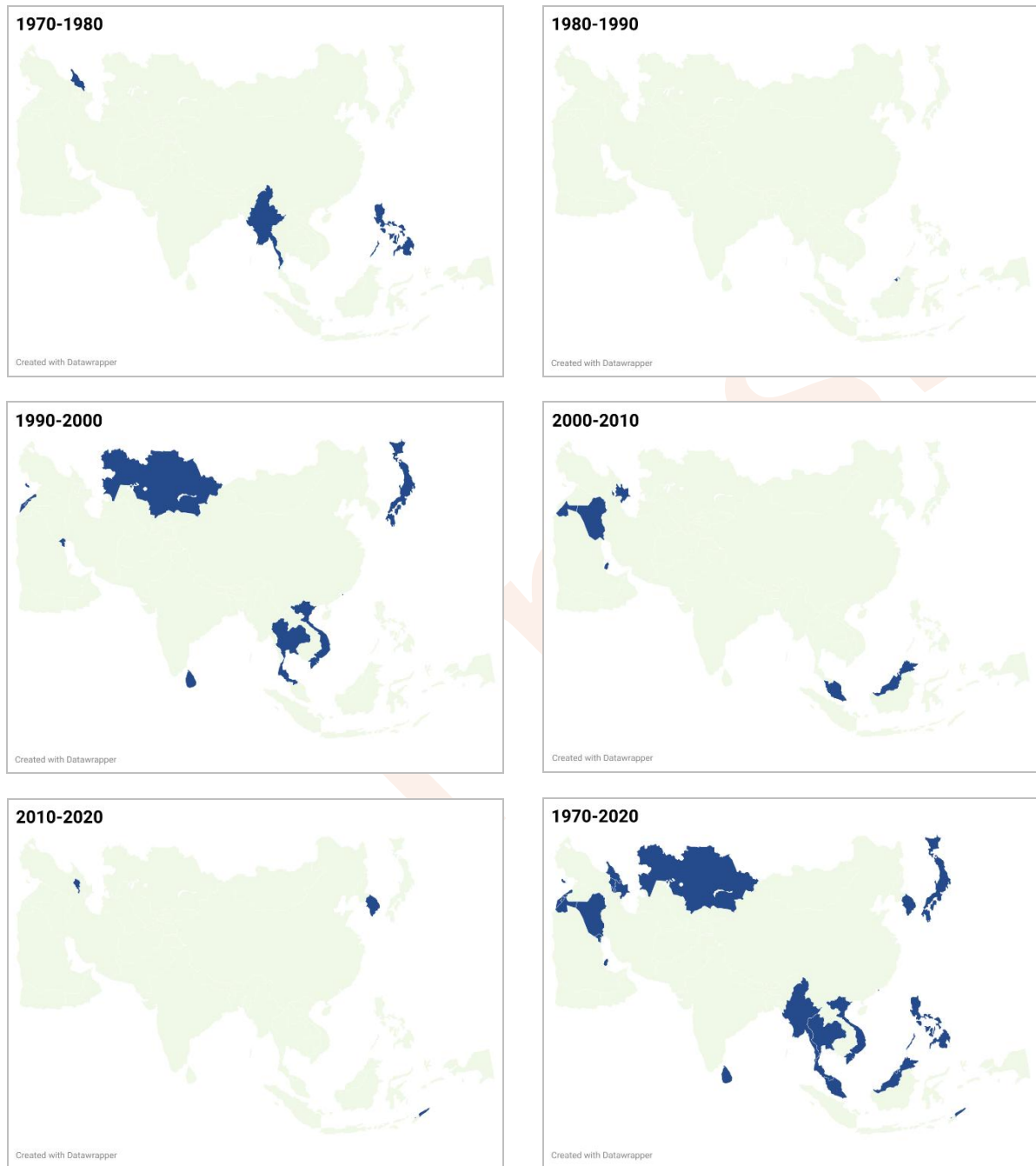


Figure 3. Asian Countries Experiencing Female Retreat from Marriage Between 1970 and 2020

Note: Darker shade represents countries experiencing retreat from marriage.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Covariates

Variable	Male		Female	
	Mean (SE)	Prop. (SE)	Mean (SE)	Prop. (SE)
Sex ratio				
Sex ratio at age 15-49 (%)	114.7 (3.11)		114.0 (2.79)	
Urbanization				
Urban population (%)	49.0 (1.75)		50.2 (1.83)	
Education				
Male adult literacy (%)	85.1 (4.14)		84.5 (4.24)	
Female adult literacy (%)	74.5 (6.22)		72.8 (6.44)	
Male primary completion (%)	86.3 (3.90)		87.7 (4.46)	
Female primary completion (%)	86.3 (3.90)		83.1 (6.97)	
Male secondary progression (%)	91.4 (1.43)		91.3 (1.52)	
Female secondary progression (%)	89.8 (1.76)		89.9 (1.81)	
Religion				
Muslim		0.6 (0.04)		0.6 (0.03)
Christian		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)
Buddhist		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)
Unaffiliated		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)
Other		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)
Labor force participation				
Male participation rate (%)	78.5 (0.91)		78.6 (0.88)	
Female participation rate (%)	44.5 (3.61)		44.2 (3.36)	
Male unemployment (%)	5.2 (0.46)		5.3 (0.38)	
Female unemployment (%)	7.1 (0.75)		7.3 (0.77)	
Economic development				
GDP per capita (Current US\$)	5532.6 (782.40)		5388.0 (694.58)	
Economic stability				
Consumer prices inflation (%)	17.1 (4.17)		20.2 (4.83)	

Table 3. Continued

Variable	Male		Female	
	Mean (SE)	Prop. (SE)	Mean (SE)	Prop. (SE)
Gender equality in education				
School enrolment (GPI)	0.9 (0.06)		0.9 (0.06)	
Gender equality in politics				
Women in parliaments (%)	11.8 (1.05)		10.6 (1.19)	
Gender equality in labor market				
Female share in labor force (%)	33.4 (2.46)		33.2 (2.35)	
Region				
Western Asia		0.4 (0.03)		0.3 (0.03)
Central Asia		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)
Southern Asia		0.2 (0.03)		0.2 (0.03)
Southeastern Asia		0.2 (0.03)		0.2 (0.03)
Eastern Asia		0.1 (0.02)		0.1 (0.02)

Note. SE = standard error; Prop. = proportion. Values in parentheses are standard errors. GPI = gender parity index

Figure 4 illustrates the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of men's and women's retreat from marriage, categorized by the predominant religion of the population in the analyzed countries. Religion emerges as a pivotal factor influencing marriage patterns. By the end of the study period, 29.6% of Muslim-majority countries witnessed a retreat from marriage among men, compared to 80.0%, 57.1%, and 50.0% in countries predominated by Christians, Buddhists, and Unaffiliated populations, respectively. For women, 40.7% of Muslim-majority countries experienced a retreat from marriage, compared to 100.0%, 50.0%, and 42.9% in countries predominated by Christians, Unaffiliated individuals, and Buddhists. Looking at the range of variations, the demographic experience is more diverse among women than men. These findings suggest that strong religious norms continue to reinforce marriage as a vital social expectation in many Muslim contexts.

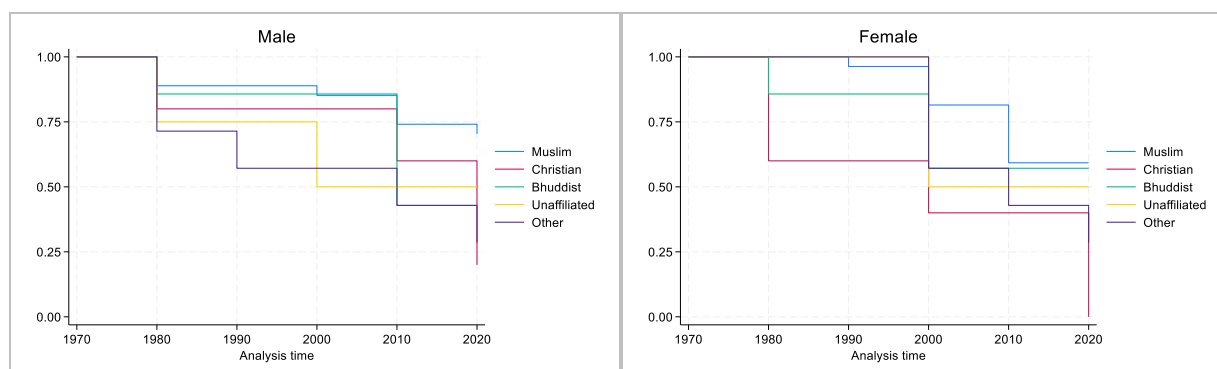


Figure 4. *Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates of Retreat from Marriage by Religion and Gender in Asian Countries, 1970–2020*

Figure 5 displays the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of men's and women's retreat from marriage by region. Regional variation is also evident. For men, the highest retreat from marriage is observed in Southeastern Asia (63.6%), followed by Eastern Asia (57.1%), Western Asia (44.4%), Southern Asia (33.3%), and Central Asia (20.0%). For women, the regional differences are even more pronounced. The highest prevalence of retreat from marriage is found in Southeastern Asia (72.7%), followed by Western Asia (66.7%), Eastern Asia (57.1%), Central Asia (20.0%), and Southern Asia (11.1%). Central and Southern Asia generally exhibit lower levels of retreat. These patterns demonstrate that marriage change is not confined to a single subregion but varies across the continent.

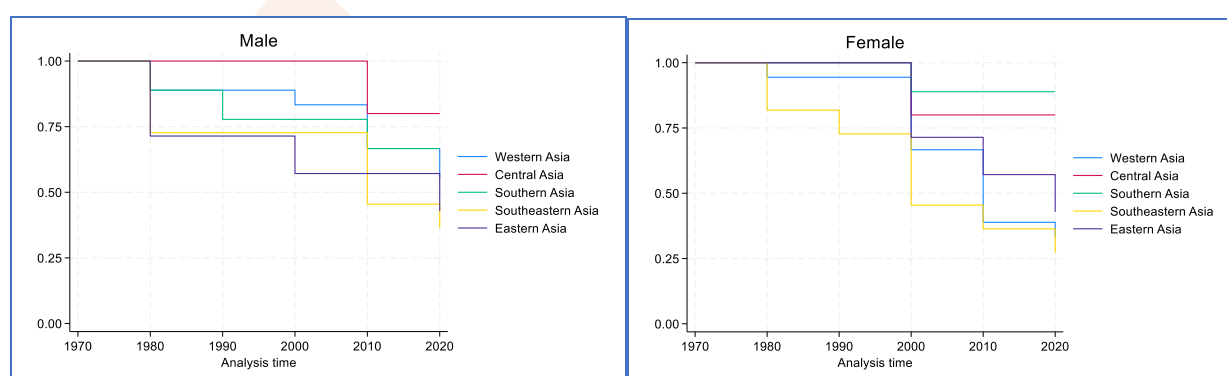


Figure 5. *Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates of Retreat from Marriage by Region and Gender in Asian Countries, 1970–2020*

Table 4. Results of Discrete-Time Hazard Models for the Determinants of Men's and Women's Retreat from Marriage in Asia, 1970–2020

Variable	Male		Female	
	Adjusted hazard ratio	P value	Adjusted hazard ratio	P value
Marriage Market				
Sex ratio	1.0	0.56	-	-
Modernization				
Urban population	1.1	0.00	1.1	0.00
Primary completion	1.0	0.57	1.0	0.01
secondary progression	1.0	0.59	1.0	0.03
Religion				
Muslim (Ref.)				
Christian	26.6	0.00	5.7	0.03
Buddhists	22.8	0.00	3.1	0.28
Unaffiliated	19.1	0.07	2.7	0.49
Other	8.7	0.03	1.8	0.57
Role Specialization				
Labor force participation	-		1.0	0.63
Unemployment	1.1	0.59	-	
Gender roles				
Seats held by women in parliaments	1.0	0.56	1.01	0.85
Region				
Western Asia (Ref.)				
Central Asia	30.5	0.05	1.0	0.98
Southern Asia	60.3	0.00	0.6	0.68
Southeastern Asia	65.4	0.00	2.9	0.25
Eastern Asia	0.8	0.89	0.3	0.36
Constant	1.0	0.00	0.0	0.01

The results of the discrete-time hazard models regarding the retreat from marriage are presented separately for men and women in Table 4. As previously mentioned, the model includes all covariates that are not highly correlated with each other. Thus, the selected covariates slightly differ between the male and female analytical models. Furthermore, the measures of education and economic participation relate to the gender being studied, because the high correlation between the attributes of men and women prevents their simultaneous

inclusion in a single model. The models incorporate all covariates simultaneously to determine the net influence of each factor after adjusting for other confounding variables.

The multivariate results indicate that three covariates significantly influence men's retreat from marriage after adjusting for other variables: urbanization, predominant religion, and region. Higher levels of urbanization are associated with greater risks of transition, which is consistent with modernization theory. Specifically, a 1% increase in the urban population increases the hazards of non-marriage by 10% after adjusting for other covariates. Men in Christian- and Buddhist-majority countries are, respectively, 26.6 and 22.8 times more likely than those in Muslim-majority countries to experience non-marriage. Furthermore, men living in countries located in Central, Southern, and Southeastern Asia are, respectively, 30.5, 60.3, and 65.4 times more likely than those in Western Asia to retreat from marriage.

For women, only two variables influence the hazards of non-marriage: urbanization and predominant religion. Similar to the trends observed among men, greater urbanization increases the probability of a retreat from marriage. Women in Christian-majority countries are also significantly more likely to experience non-marriage than those residing in Muslim-majority countries. The magnitude of the influence for the former is similar to that of men, whereas the latter is much smaller than the effects observed for the male experience, as evidenced by the respective hazard ratios.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study offers a broad comparative perspective on the retreat from marriage in Asia over the past five decades. It aims to address gaps in the current literature and provide a deeper insight into the driving factors behind this demographic shift, analyzed through various theoretical perspectives.

The empirical findings indicate that universal marriage has weakened across much of the continent, although the pace and determinants of this change vary by gender and context. The Kaplan-Meier survival estimates reveal that in 52% of the analyzed countries, marriage is no longer universal for women, while 46% of the countries display a similar pattern for men. Furthermore, the discrete-time hazard models confirm that the determinants of the retreat from marriage differ between men and women to some extent. Consequently, these findings lend support to Gender Role theory, suggesting that socially defined gender roles significantly influence individual decisions regarding marriage. However, gender equality in education, politics, or the economy did not significantly affect marriage patterns, a finding that does not align with the expectations of this theoretical framework ([Goldscheider et al., 2015](#)).

Moreover, the findings indicate that both structural and cultural influences tied to modernization affect men's experiences. Urbanization consistently emerges as a central driver, highlighting the role of structural transformation in reshaping family behavior. Urban environments, which offer greater opportunities for individualism and non-traditional lifestyles, render both men and women more likely to retreat from marriage, supporting Modernization theory ([Goode, 1963](#)). At the same time, religion remains a powerful moderating force. The persistence of relatively universal marriage in many Muslim-majority countries suggests that cultural and normative frameworks can sustain traditional marriage patterns even amid rapid socio-economic change.

The Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of the retreat from marriage further indicate that men in Eastern Asia are the most likely to retreat from marriage. This trend can be attributed to a conflict between the swift pace of socio-economic changes and the slower evolution of family expectations and responsibilities ([Raymo et al., 2015](#)). Interestingly, after adjusting for other confounding factors, there is no statistically significant evidence that living in Eastern Asia influences the hazards of non-marriage. Instead, men in Central, Southern, and Southeastern Asia are more likely to experience non-marriage than those in Western Asia. This suggests that regional variations in urbanization and culturally driven family norms impact marriage choices ([Yeung et al., 2018](#); [Torabi & Baschieri, 2010](#)).

Similar to the male experience, women's non-marriage is also influenced by more modern lifestyles in urbanized countries, after adjusting for other factors. However, only women living in countries predominated by Christians are less likely than those in Muslim-majority countries to experience non-marriage. Islam appears to consistently promote marriage and prevent both men and women from celibacy. As noted by [Talukder et al. \(2020\)](#), religious values affiliated with Islam uphold marriage as a societal norm. In contrast to men's experience, women's retreat from marriage is not significantly influenced by region, further underscoring the operation of gender roles in marital decisions.

In conclusion, this study offers a nuanced understanding of the retreat from marriage in Asia, highlighting that the retreat from marriage reflects a complex interaction between modernization, cultural continuity, and evolving gender roles. The findings affirm the relevance of Gender Role and Modernization theories in explaining contemporary marriage trends. The significant gender differences observed in the retreat from marriage underscore the need for targeted policy interventions that consider the unique challenges faced by men and women respectively. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for context-sensitive analyses and policies that recognize both structural pressures and enduring social norms in

shaping marriage behavior. Future research should delve deeper into these dynamics, focusing on the long-term implications of socio-economic development on marriage patterns and its varying impacts across diverse cultural contexts.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with Ethical Guidelines

All ethical considerations, including trustworthiness and citation accuracy have been taken into account by the researchers.

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Authors' Contributions

Not Applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Author's ORCID

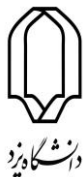
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تغییرات زمانی در رویگردانی از ازدواج در آسیا

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مقاله پژوهشی

چکیده

زمینه و هدف: ازدواج به صورت تاریخی سنگ‌بنای سازماندهی اجتماعی در آسیا بوده است؛ با این حال، در دهه‌های اخیر شاهد «رویگردانی» چشمگیری از ازدواج بوده‌ایم که خود را در قالب تأخیر در ازدواج و افزایش نسبت افرادی که تا سنین میان‌سالی هرگز ازدواج نکرده‌اند، نشان می‌دهد. هدف این پژوهش، تحلیل رویگردانی از ازدواج در آسیا با تمرکز بر تغییرات در میزان شیوع آن و شناسایی نیروهای محرک اجتماعی-اقتصادی و فرهنگی زمینه‌ساز این روند است.

روش و داده‌ها: داده‌های این پژوهش از آژانس‌های مختلف سازمان ملل متحد گردآوری شده و ۵۰ کشور آسیایی را در بازه زمانی ۱۹۷۰ تا ۲۰۲۰ پوشش می‌دهد. در این مطالعه از روش‌های تحلیل تاریخیچه رویداد استفاده شده است. برآوردهای بقای کاپلان-میر برای بررسی احتمال باقی ماندن کشورها در وضعیت ازدواج عمومی در طول زمان به کار گرفته شدند. همچنین، مدل‌های مخاطره زمان‌گسسته برای شناسایی عوامل مرتبط با گذار از وضعیت ازدواج عمومی برآورد گردیدند.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهند که ۵۲ درصد از کشورها رویگردانی از ازدواج را در میان زنان تجربه کرده‌اند، درحالی‌که این رقم برای مردان ۴۶ درصد بوده است. شهرنشینی، دین غالب و تفاوت‌های منطقه‌ای به شکلی معنادار روندهای ازدواج را تحت تأثیر قرار داده‌اند و در این میان تفاوت‌های جنسیتی آشکاری مشاهده می‌شود. این مطالعه نقش نظریه‌های نقش جنسیتی و نوسازی را در درک روندهای معاصر ازدواج برجسته می‌سازد.

بحث و نتیجه‌گیری: این پژوهش با ارائه یک چشم‌انداز تطبیقی گسترده درباره رویگردانی از ازدواج در آسیا طی پنج دهه، بینش‌هایی را ارائه می‌دهد که می‌تواند سیاست‌گذاران را در خصوص پویایی‌های فرهنگی، جغرافیایی و اجتماعی-اقتصادی مؤثر بر الگوهای ازدواج و ساختارهای خانواده آگاه سازد.

واژگان کلیدی: آسیا، تحلیل پیشینه‌یافته، جنسیت، ازدواج، نوسازی، دین.

پیام کلیدی: یافته‌ها بر ضرورت تحلیل‌ها و سیاست‌گذاری‌های مبتنی بر زمینه تأکید دارند که هم فشارهای ساختاری و هم هنجارهای اجتماعی پایدار را در شکل‌دهی به رفتار ازدواج در آسیا باز می‌شناساند. در نتیجه، سیاست‌گذاری مؤثر مستلزم طراحی مداخلات جنسیتی ویژه، با در نظر گرفتن نقش تعدیل‌کننده قدرتمند هنجارهای خانوادگی مذهبی و منطقه‌ای است.

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