



## **Delayed child bearing is a choice or a chance? Why do women delay childbearing?**

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### **Abstract**

It is believed that women in their early years of reproduction in order to attain personal autonomy choose to delay pregnancy by delaying the marriage and opt to take up the career path. Delayed child bearing is an accepted norm in today's world. The objective of this study was to identify the reasons why women delay the pregnancy. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was carried out in a tertiary care hospital Panchkula, Haryana in 2017. One hundred thirty (130) pregnant women with 30 years + 1 day of completed age were included in the survey. Multiple reasons were mentioned in the questionnaire finally were grouped into six categories. This survey revealed that 46.1% of the women delayed pregnancy due to socio-demographic reasons. 25.4% had had obstetrical events 10% wanted to have a male child. 9.2% of them had fertility related problems. 6.2% wanted to have one or two living issues. 3.1% wanted to have third child. Like the women in developed countries Indian women also given preference to their education, employment and financial stability. The fertility related problems and a frank opinion on the desire to have a male child as well as the desire for a third child were among the reasons for the delayed childbearing.

**Keywords:** delayed Pregnancy, delayed childbearing advanced maternal age pregnancy, reasons for delayed childbirth

### **1. Introduction**

Delayed child bearing simply means that the women conceived later than the usual timings. This delay may be a choice or a chance. When it is a choice we can say that women enjoy high degree of control over their pregnancy but having the option to delay the motherhood is safe for the mother and the baby is a query. Delayed child bearing is becoming a trend in both developed and developing countries [1].

### **2. Purpose of this study**

There is limited literature available from India as to why women delay pregnancy. There are literatures available on adverse pregnancy outcomes in advanced maternal age pregnancy. If we understand the reasons why women delay pregnancy solutions may be brought to address the issue of adverse pregnancy outcomes. Even in the highest medical educational level the dangers involved with delayed pregnancy is not included as a part of their curriculum [2].

### **3. Literature review**

Fertility in women starts to decline from the age of 32 and decrease sharply after 37 and making it more difficult for the women to conceive at the age of 40. Women felt that In vitro fertilization is a cure for decreasing fertility with the increasing age [3]. Three hundred and sixty two (362) subfertile women and 362 pregnant women were taken for a cross-sectional study, even after knowing the impact of age on pregnancy 85% of the subfertile women believed that through IVF they can overcome this problem [4].

Study from Sweden revealed that nowadays women are better educated and search for a suitable match with higher income. Women from Europe and US expressed that one of the main reasons to delay their pregnancy was difficulty in finding the suitable partner. A long running survey conducted among childless men and women 365 each and in the age group of 28, 32, 36 and 40 years in which 28 years old women felt they were too young, had to do other things before opting to have a baby, felt financially not stabilized and don't have a suitable partner. Participants between the age of 36-40 years were not interested in having a baby (44%) and also felt not mature enough to have child [5]. An anonymous mailed survey conducted between Jan 2002 to May 2003. commonly reported reasons for delayed childbearing were not having a suitable partner (50%), financial stability (32%), career advancement (19%), recently developed interest for a baby (26%), and not aware of the impact of delaying the pregnancy (18%) [6].

Study from Nepal concluded that reasons for advanced age pregnancy were 21.1% desire for a male child (21.1%), husband was outside the country (16.6%), late marriage and desire for large family (13.3%) [7]. Online survey of 500 childless women between 18 – 35 years were assessed. The most strongly endorsed factor to be considered before having a baby was the ability to financially support a child (96.6%) good maternal health (92%) and having a proper home to raise a child 92% [8]. A computer-assisted telephone interview conducted in two urban regions of Alberta Canada concluded that factors that influenced the timing of childbearing for both men and women included financial

security (85.85) and partner suitability to parent (80.2%) [9].

**4. Methods**

Cross sectional descriptive survey, conducted in a tertiary care hospital among the one thirty pregnant women above 30 yrs. Questionnaire was administered to find the reasons for delayed pregnancy. Reasons were later categorized into 6 categories.

**5. Results**

The reasons for delayed pregnancy was grouped into 6 categories; sociodemographic reasons, fertility related problems, bad obstetrical events, death of a child/want living issue, desire for a having male child, desire for large family. Following is the table showing the reasons for delayed child bearing.

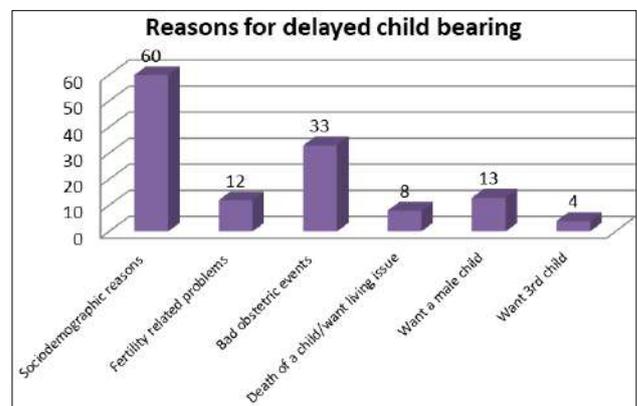
**Table 1:** Reasons for delayed child bearing

Reasons for delayed child bearing	Frequency	Percentage
Socio-demographic reasons	60	46
Education & employment	23	18
Late marriage	16	12.3
Late marriage & education& employment	6	4.6
Financial security	5	3.8
Late marriage & 2nd child	10	7.69
Fertility related problems	12	9.2
Late marriage & infertility	2	1.5
Infertility	4	3
Subfertility	2	1.5
Infertility, abortion & 2nd child	4	3
Bad obstetric events	33	25.3
Single abortion & 2nd child	14	10.7
Recurrent abortions & 2nd child	17	13.07
Recurrent abortions & 3rd child	2	1.5
Death of a child/want living issue	8	6.15
No living issue/Recurrent abortions	4	3.07
Abortion & death of a baby want 2nd child	2	1.5
Want a 2nd living issue	1	0.769
Death of a baby & want of 2nd child	1	0.769
Desire for having a male child	13	10
Single abortion and want of 3rd child male	1	0.769
Want of male child	9	6.92
Recurrent abortions & want a male child	3	2.3
Desire for large family/Want 3rd child	4	3.076
Want of 3rd child	3	2.3
Abortion & 3rd child	1	0.769

Among the six major categories of reasons for delayed child bearing maximum found was socio-demographic reasons and the least was the desire for large family. Women in the developed countries also delayed their pregnancy and given importance to their education, career advancement and financial stability.[3,5-8] Indian women had the reason of late marriage which can be compared with the factor of not having a suitable partner in the western scenario [5, 6, 9]. Fertility related problems were not identified in other studies whereas women believed that in-vitro fertilization is the cure for fertility problems of increasing age [3, 4].

**Table 2:** Six categories of reasons for delayed child bearing

Category	Frequency
Socio-demographic reasons	60
Fertility related problems	12
Bad obstetric history	33
Death of a child/want living issue	8
Want a male child	13
Want 3rd child	4



**Fig 1:** Frequency distribution of reasons for delayed child bearing

**Inference**

Maximum scored reasons among the six categories were socio-demographic reasons (60) and bad obstetrical events in the previous pregnancies. The least was the want of a third child/ desire for a large family.

## 6. Conclusion

Delayed child bearing is not purely a choice or a chance. The reasons varies from one women to another and also from developing countries to developed countries but the fact remains that the trend of delayed child bearing is on the rise. Socio-demographic factors were the most important reasons identified among the other categories.

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