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**Literature Review: Indonesia's Declining Birth
Rate and Its Implications for Marriage Decisions**

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the factors causing the declining birth rate in Indonesia and its impact on marriage decisions. The method used is a literature review with a qualitative approach, analyzing secondary data from journals, articles, and other relevant sources. The results show that the declining birth rate is influenced by various factors, including increased education, changing social norms, economic conditions, and the "child free" phenomenon. Increased education, especially for women, encourages postponement of marriage for career and financial stability. Economic pressures, such as high living and education costs, are also the main reasons couples delay marriage. The "child free" phenomenon is increasingly accepted in modern culture, even though it goes against traditional values. The impact on Indonesia's demographic structure includes demographic bonus opportunities as well as challenges related to an aging population and the need for social services. The study concludes that the declining birth rate has significant implications for Indonesia's social, cultural and economic dynamics, requiring a holistic policy approach to manage demographic change in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Birth, Child Free, Decision, Demographics, Married.

PRELIMINARY

Among the most populous countries in the world, Indonesia ranks fourth after India, the People's Republic of China and the United States. This is due to Indonesia's uncontrolled population growth, which is greater than the world's population growth. Population growth will have a negative impact on welfare, such as increased unemployment and crime, if it is not balanced with an increase in economic capacity (Diniari, 2018). In Indonesia alone, with a population growth rate of 4.5 million people per year, population growth is a major problem. By 2023, the world's population will reach 8 billion and Indonesia, with 277 million people, will be the fourth most populous country. This is an increase of 0.74% from the previous year. An increase in the number of migration and birth rates is a contributing factor to Indonesia's population growth (Ninawati, et al, 2024).

However, in the last 5 decades, the fertility rate in Indonesia has been declining. According to several research studies, the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) decreased from 5.6 children per woman in the 1970s to around 2.3 in the 2010s (Situngkir, et al, 2024). Meanwhile, other data on infant mortality rates also show a significant decline. For example, according to BPS (Central Bureau of Statistics), the infant mortality rate in Indonesia has decreased from 68 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to around 23 per 1,000 live births in 2015.

The decline in birth and death rates in Indonesia has coincided with economic development and improved access to health services that have changed over time. There are changes in the guarantee of facilities provided by the government to its citizens, this is a challenge in dealing with the rapid population growth. Rapid population growth has become one of the problems faced by many countries around the world (Saggaf, et al, 2018). With the increase in population, various problems arise, including poverty, health systems, reduced employment opportunities, and the decline in the quality of human resources that

do not meet the needs. Rapid population growth has attracted the attention of countries around the world to pay more attention to the rate of population development (Bidarti, 2020).

In the face of an increase in Indonesia's population which continues to increase every year, the government must have special guarantees for the rights of its citizens. The existence of guarantees in the form of decent livelihoods, welfare, education guarantees, health, and the level of state security determines the quality of life of citizens in a country (Yustina & Yohanes, 2020). However, improving the quality of life is followed by uncontrolled population growth which can cause various problems for a country. Population density in a place, especially in urban areas, has a wide impact. The impact is felt by residents who occur continuously.

Given the imbalance between the growth rate and quality of Indonesia's population, many couples are reluctant to have children. This is due to the risks experienced such as the availability of adequate public facilities. If this condition continues to occur, it will affect Indonesia's long-term national economic growth and national development. Birth rate or fertility is defined as the ability of a woman to produce live births. Live births are one of the factors that can increase the population. In addition to high migration rates, past birth rates greatly influence current high fertility rates (Rahman, 2023).

The number of births in a population depends on a number of factors, such as age structure, education level, age at first marriage, number of marriages, employment status of women, contraceptive use, and income or wealth. With the various factors above, several studies have revealed that women are reluctant to marry or delay marriage. According to Wulandari (2016), states that marriage is no longer considered an ideal lifestyle for everyone and is often postponed or not married. As a result, more and more couples are living together without a legal marriage bond, and more and more women who work and have children work outside the home and help earn a living.

The existence of this phenomenon is inversely proportional to marriage, which is a sunnah of the prophet which is highly recommended to be carried out by Muslims. This is a natural event and the most effective tool for maintaining offspring and strengthening human relations that ensure the tranquility of love and affection (Arifandi, 2018). Marriage in religious terms is called "Nikah", which is an agreement or contract that binds a man and woman to each other to prevent them from having sexual intercourse. The purpose of this marriage is to realize a loving and peaceful family life (mawaddah wa rahmah) in a way that is approved by Allah SWT (Irade, et al, 2024).

Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this research is to find out the various factors behind the decline in the birth rate and its relation to demographic changes due to the decline in the birth rate, so that how these factors can affect the tendency to delay or avoid marriage. Thus, this research is expected to provide insight into the impact of demographic change on social, cultural and economic dynamics in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, by implementing a literature review method which is part of a series of activities related to data collection methods in the form of library data, recording and reading, and managing research data systematically, analytically, critically, and objectively. Research with this literature review in preparing it is the same as other studies, but what distinguishes it is the method and source of data collection by taking data from the library, reading, recording, and processing research materials sourced from research articles about data variables in this study. Then, the collected data will be collected in one type of data and analyzed. The data to be analyzed is secondary data in the form of research results from various sources such as articles, internet sites, journals, and others that are still relevant to this study. Furthermore, the data analysis technique in this study will use the content analysis data analysis technique. In general, a literature review is an approach to solving problems by investigating previous written sources. The descriptive method used to analyze data and answer research questions by covering various sources from journals available on the internet in the 2015-2025 publication period with relevant fields.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Demographic Changes in Indonesia

Indonesia's current demographic bonus can benefit economic and social development. Its peak is estimated to occur in 2030–2040, when more than 60% of the productive age population will live in Indonesia (Prasarti & Prakoso, 2020). The demographic bonus is a population condition in which there are more productive age population than non-productive age population, with a lower dependency ratio between productive age population and non-productive age population. Considered a "bonus" because this population condition can provide the country with the opportunity to increase economic growth by maximizing the availability of existing human resources as the subject of development.

The availability of labor supply, savings, and human capital are three mechanisms through which the demographic bonus can affect a country's economic growth (Muhaemin, 2021). The demographic bonus is expected to occur within a century after Indonesia's independence, or in 2045. This is a very rare event in history. If this demographic bonus is managed properly, Indonesia will benefit. However, the demographic bonus will be a disaster for Indonesia if it is not anticipated from the start. Opportunities will arise for Indonesia if Indonesia can utilize and prepare for the demographic bonus properly. The demographic bonus will backfire on Indonesia and especially the government, increasing unemployment rates, if not prepared properly.

According to estimates, at least 183 million people, or around 67 percent of the entire population of Indonesia, are of productive age (Minan, 2021). This shows that there are more people of productive age than people of non-productive age, so that the dependency ratio between productive and non-productive ages is reduced. Therefore, the demographic bonus can be very beneficial for the government if they can use it to improve the quality of human resources through education, training, health, and the provision of extensive employment opportunities as a post-demographic bonus investment.

If the government and society are unable to accommodate the surge in productive age, a demographic disaster will occur due to the abundant availability of productive age workers. As a result, productive human resources will lose their benefits because there is no allocation and sufficient employment facilities to optimize the role of the productive age (Sarmita, 2017). Therefore, in order for our country to be truly ready to face the demographic bonus, the government, society, and all stakeholders must be careful. If the Indonesian government and society can utilize and prepare for the demographic bonus properly, there will be many profitable opportunities. One way to prepare the younger generation to face the demographic bonus era is education (Heryanah, 2015).

Factors of Declining Birth Rates

Over the past few decades, Indonesia's demographic pattern has undergone significant changes. The declining birth rate is one of the main changes that has had a direct impact on the country's population structure. This phenomenon indicates the growing dynamics in society in terms of social, economic, and cultural (Rahman, 2023). Government policies are not the only cause of the declining birth rate; the changing paradigm of life in modern societies is also a cause. This research delves deeper into the various components that contribute to the declining birth rate in Indonesia, and how demographic, economic, and social structures influence this.

However, another factor that influences the birth rate in Indonesia is the child-free phenomenon that is widespread in society. However, this child-free phenomenon has raised a lot of discussion in society, especially in Indonesia, which has a culture that tends to prioritize having children and respecting descendants (Zuhdiantito, 2023). Some opinions that often arise include the possibility that the birth rate will decrease, the problem of generation continuity, and the possibility that conventional values will disappear.

In several developed countries, the child-free phenomenon is increasingly trending. This is considered one of the causes of the decline in birth rates in these countries (Ela, et al, 2022). However, this view is still controversial in some cultures, such as Indonesia. Because, the family is considered an important part of society. This will have an impact on Indonesia's demographic bonus. Theoretically, it is possible that the child-free phenomenon will have an impact on the Islamic demographic bonus in Indonesia, because there is a correlation between the number of births and population growth. Couples

who choose to be child-free will experience a decrease in the number of births, while conversely, if couples choose to have children, they will experience an increase in the number of births (Rahmayanti, 2022).

Table 1. Factors Causing the Decline in Birth Rates in Indonesia

No	Causative factor	Description
1	Education Improvement	Wanita dengan tingkat pendidikan tinggi cenderung menunda pernikahan demi karier dan stabilitas finansial (Wulandari, 2023).
2	Changes in Social Norms	Marriage is no longer considered a necessity, the emergence of the phenomenon of cohabitation without official ties (Ningtias, 2022).
3	Economic Pressure	High costs of living, including housing and education, cause couples to delay marriage and having children (Nugrahani, 2024).
4	The Child-Free Phenomenon	Increasingly accepted in modern culture, especially in big cities, even though it conflicts with traditional values (Zuhdiantito, 2023).

The child-free phenomenon towards the demographic bonus in Indonesia is influenced by several factors such as economic conditions, education, health, culture, and current life. Economic conditions are seen as one of the main factors influencing couples to choose child-free. The difficulty of finding a job with various kinds of competition and the increasing skills needed to have a job are one of the triggers for someone's unstable economic condition. Coupled with the competition in getting a job, the unemployment rate also increases. Couples prefer to postpone having children until they feel more financially and emotionally ready, due to the high cost of living and economic pressures in big cities. With the economic instability that has hit, as well as the increasing needs of life such as the fulfillment of clothing, food, and shelter, it makes someone think a lot about having children. A culture that views children as the moral responsibility of parents and a decision that must be fulfilled in everyday life.

Another factor is from the education sector. With the condition of education that continues to improve every year in meeting the needs in improving human resources. For married couples who have become parents and have children, the right to meet the needs of their children in getting a decent and quality education is increasing. However, along with the many requests, the cost of education that must be met also increases. Many parents choose quality education with expensive education costs. This is another factor for parents to consider having children.

The last factor that is considered to be a major influence is the influence of culture. The existence of a culture that every year hits prospective parents creates a large level of influence. Although Indonesia is often known for the term "Many children, much fortune" it seems that this does not apply to current conditions. Many people argue that this is not relevant to the increasingly developing social, economic, cultural, and societal conditions. Existing cultures, such as the child-free phenomenon, have also hit various developed countries which were then adapted by developing countries such as Indonesia.

In this case, the Indonesian government can try to overcome the child free phenomenon and increase the Islamic demographic bonus. The government can increase the awareness of married couples about the importance of having children by holding socialization campaigns and providing incentives for couples who have children (Hapsari, et al, 2015). The government can also improve the economic and educational conditions of the community so that the rights of couples who have children can be guaranteed with adequate public facilities that are guaranteed by the government.

The Impact of the Declining Birth Rate on Demographic Structure

Indonesia's demographic structure has changed significantly as a result of the declining birth rate. Indonesia's demographic bonus, where there are more people of productive age than non-productive age, provides a great opportunity for economic growth. However, this change also brings challenges, such as designing adequate social and economic infrastructure to support the younger generation.

The dependency ratio in Indonesia has changed due to the decline in the birth rate. With the reduction in the number of children in a family, the financial burden that must be borne by the productive age group is reduced. This allows for increased investment in education and health, which in turn will

produce better human resources. According to research conducted by Prasarti and Prakoso (2020), a lower dependency ratio allows the country to spend more resources on areas that increase economic growth, such as infrastructure and technology.

This change brings long-term problems. One of the most striking impacts is the increasing number of older populations. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the share of Indonesian population aged 60 years and over continues to increase. In 2020, this share reached 10% of the total population, and is expected to increase to 20% by 2045 (BPS, 2021). Due to this situation, adequate social security and health service systems must be created immediately.

The decline in birth rates also has an impact on intergenerational dynamics. Interaction between the younger and older generations becomes more limited due to the lack of children. This phenomenon can lead to reduced transmission of culture and knowledge between generations. On the other hand, smaller families usually have more intimate relationships, which can increase parental attention to their children's growth. Families with fewer children tend to be better able to provide adequate education and emotional support, according to research by Kulsum et al (2016).

Table 2. Impact of Declining Birth Rates on Demographic Structure

No	Impact	Description
1	Demographic Bonus	The number of productive age population is greater than the non-productive age population, creating economic opportunities (Muhaemin, 2021).
2	Increasing Elderly Population	The proportion of the population aged 60 years and over increased from 10% in 2020 to 20% in 2045 (BPS, 2021).
3	Urbanization	Many young people migrate to large cities, increasing pressure on urban infrastructure (Pida et al., 2025).
4	Changes in Consumption Patterns	The decline in the number of children has caused a shift in demand for products and services oriented towards the elderly (Ulum, 2018).

Another impact that occurs in the decline in birth rates also causes increased urbanization. People are more likely to migrate to large cities in search of economic opportunities due to smaller family structures. This causes an increase in population concentration in urban areas, which increases pressure on city infrastructure. Pida et al (2025) study shows that poorly managed urbanization can cause problems such as congestion, housing shortages, and increased pollution.

In the field of education, resources in education can be better allocated per child due to the decline in the birth rate. This has the potential to improve the overall quality of education. However, the government must also ensure that everyone has access to education, including in remote areas. A study conducted by Amadi et al (2023) emphasized that one way to prepare the younger generation to face the upcoming problems is to spend money on education.

Changes in production and consumption patterns are additional challenges to be faced. With the decreasing young population, demand for some goods and services, such as housing and education, will decrease. On the other hand, demand for goods and services that are right for the elderly will increase. The government and the private sector must work together to adjust public policies and business strategies to suit demographic changes (Ulum, 2018).

Overall, Indonesia's declining birth rate presents both opportunities and challenges. The government must be proactive and holistic in taking advantage of these opportunities. Some actions that can be taken include implementing policies that support families, investing in education and health, and preparing for an aging population. Indonesia can address the impacts of declining birth rates with the right plan, which will result in a more prosperous and sustainable society.

The Influence of Causal Factors on the Decision to Marry

The decline in the birth rate in Indonesia is inseparable from the changing views of society about the institution of marriage. New dynamics in individual marriage decisions have been caused by causal variables such as changes in social norms, education, and economy. This study investigates how these

things impact the tendency to delay or even avoid marriage, which in turn affects the country's demographic patterns.

One of the main influences is the increase in education, especially for women. Women tend to postpone their education and career after marriage as their education level increases. Highly educated women prefer to postpone marriage because they want to achieve financial and emotional stability first (Wulandari, 2023). Because their reproductive age is shorter, this condition has a direct impact on fertility rates.

The decision to marry is also influenced by economic factors. Couples often postpone marriage due to the increasing cost of living, especially in big cities. Young couples face financial problems such as buying a house, financing their children's future education, and meeting basic needs. Economic pressure is the main cause of the decline in the number of marriages among the younger generation (Nugrahani, 2024).

In addition, changing social and cultural norms have also influenced the way people view marriage. Marriage is now seen as an option rather than a necessity in modern society. Among the younger generation, especially in big cities, phenomena such as cohabitation or living together without marriage are increasingly accepted. Conventional values about marriage are changing, with more attention being paid to personal achievements such as career and lifestyle.

Table 3. Policies that can address the decline in birth rates

No	Policy	Description
1	Financial Incentives	Housing subsidies, education, and benefits for couples with children (Grimbert, 2024).
2	Improving Access to Education and Health	Provision of quality health and education services to improve family welfare (Amadi et al., 2023).
3	Socialization of the Importance of Family	Educational campaigns about the benefits of having children and long-term family stability (Hapsari et al., 2015).

The perception that marriage is a bond full of responsibilities also influences this phenomenon. Younger people often feel unprepared for the financial and emotional burdens associated with marriage. More couples who choose not to have children also choose not to marry. They believe that having children requires a lot of preparation financially and emotionally.

Indonesia's demographic patterns show the impact of the decision to delay marriage. The birth rate naturally decreases as more people delay marriage. This causes the population structure to become older and the number of young people to decrease. Although it provides opportunities through the demographic bonus, this condition also causes problems in the long term, such as increasing the need for health services for the elderly and decreasing the number of productive workers in the future (Rahman & Syakur, 2018).

However, this phenomenon has a positive side. If someone decides to postpone marriage, they can devote their time and attention to their professional and personal progress before starting a family. This can improve the quality of life and encourage economic growth. However, the government must ensure that this phenomenon does not cause a demographic imbalance. To overcome the negative effects of the declining birth rate, policies that support families, such as incentives for couples who marry and have children, can be useful (Grimbert, 2024).

Overall, the influence of the causal components on the decision to marry shows a significant social transformation taking place in Indonesia. Not only is this phenomenon changing people's perspectives on marriage, but it is also changing the country's demographic, economic, and cultural dynamics. To properly address these changes, a broad approach involving government, society, and the private sector is needed to create an environment that supports a balance between marriage and birth rates. Indonesia can capitalize on the opportunities offered by these changes while reducing barriers.

Discussion

Dynamics of Declining Birth Rates in Indonesia

The decline in fertility in Indonesia is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The main factors contributing to this trend include social and economic changes, increased education, and changes in cultural values and family norms. In recent decades, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Indonesia has decreased significantly from around 5.6 children per woman in the 1970s to around 2.3 children per woman in the 2010s (Situngkir et al., 2024). This decline has not only affected the population structure, but also the social and economic patterns of society.

One of the main factors causing the decline in birth rates is the increase in education levels, especially for women. Studies show that women with higher education tend to delay marriage and have fewer children (Wulandari, 2023). With higher education, women have a greater chance of participating in the workforce and achieving financial stability before starting a family. This contributes to the delay in marriage and, directly, to the decline in birth rates.

Another factor contributing to this trend is increasing economic pressure. The high cost of living, including housing, education, and healthcare, is making many couples reconsider their decision to have children. Research conducted by Nugrahani (2024) shows that young couples face significant financial challenges in starting a family, so many of them choose to delay marriage and reduce the number of children they plan to have.

In addition to economic and educational factors, changes in social norms also play an important role in the decline in birth rates. Traditional views that emphasize marriage and having many children as a social standard are beginning to change, especially among the younger generation in big cities. The "child-free" phenomenon is increasingly gaining acceptance in modern society (Ela et al., 2022). Many couples choose not to have children for reasons of personal freedom, economic pressures, and the desire to pursue a certain career and lifestyle.

The Impact of Declining Birth Rates on Demographic Structure

The impact of the decline in birth rates on Indonesia's demographic structure is quite significant. One of the main impacts is the emergence of a demographic bonus, a condition in which the number of productive-age population is greater than the number of non-productive-age population (Prasarti & Prakoso, 2020). This demographic bonus can be a great opportunity for Indonesia to increase economic growth if supported by the right policies, such as increasing access to education and skills training for the workforce.

However, if not managed properly, the decline in the birth rate can also pose serious challenges for the country. One of the main challenges is the increasing number of elderly people. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of people aged 60 years and over continues to increase, from 10% in 2020 to 20% in 2045 (BPS, 2021). This condition can lead to an increase in the need for health services and social security for the elderly, which has the potential to burden the country's economic and welfare systems.

In addition, the decline in birth rates can also have an impact on the level of economic growth in the long term. With the decreasing number of children in the population, the number of future workers will decrease. This can hamper economic growth, especially if it is not balanced by an increase in the productivity of the existing workforce (Rahman, 2023). Therefore, a policy is needed that can balance economic growth and demographic sustainability.

Implications for the Decision to Marry

The decline in birth rates is closely related to an individual's decision to marry. Some of the main factors that influence the decision to marry include education level, economic conditions, and changes in social values. A study conducted by Wulandari (2023) showed that the higher a person's education level, the more likely they are to delay marriage in order to pursue a career and economic stability.

In addition, uncertain economic conditions are also the main reason why many individuals postpone marriage. The high cost of living, especially in urban areas, makes many couples feel unprepared to build a household. The phenomenon of "waithood" or postponing marriage is becoming increasingly

common, especially among the younger generation who face financial pressures and job uncertainty (Nugrahani, 2024).

On the other hand, changes in social values also play an important role in the decline in marriage rates. Marriage is no longer considered the only way to achieve happiness and stability in life. The phenomenon of "cohabitation" or living together without marriage is increasingly accepted in urban communities (Raihana, 2024). This shows a change in mindset that is more flexible in forming a family.

However, although the trend of delaying marriage and choosing not to have children is increasing, this phenomenon also brings new challenges to society. One of the main challenges is how to ensure a balance between individual freedom and population sustainability. Therefore, policies are needed that can provide incentives for young couples to marry and have children, such as housing subsidies, more affordable access to education, and tax incentives for families with children (Grimbert, 2024).

The decline in the birth rate in Indonesia is a phenomenon influenced by various factors, including increased education, economic conditions, and changes in social norms. The impact of this decline can bring opportunities and challenges for the country. On the one hand, the demographic bonus can be an opportunity to increase economic growth, but on the other hand, an aging population can cause a large social and economic burden.

To address these challenges, the government needs to adopt comprehensive and sustainable policies. Some policy recommendations that can be implemented include: (1) Increasing access to education and skills training to ensure that the workforce can contribute maximally to economic growth. (2) Providing economic incentives for married couples with children, such as housing subsidies, child allowances, and tax breaks. (3) Improving the social and health security system for the elderly, to anticipate the impact of an aging population. (4) Developing flexible policies related to gender roles in the family, to support a balance between professional life and family life. With the right policies, Indonesia can take advantage of the opportunities arising from demographic changes and effectively address the challenges posed by declining birth rates.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, the results show that in Indonesia, the decline in fertility is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including education, economy, and shifting social norms. Young couples tend to delay or even avoid marriage due to economic pressures such as the cost of living and education, while more educated women tend to delay marriage. In addition, there has been a decline in the number of marriages and births due to cultural changes that encourage the acceptance of modern lifestyles. Indonesia's demographic structure has undergone significant changes as a result. These changes include challenges and opportunities from the demographic bonus to the risks of an aging population. Broader policies, such as providing incentives for families, increasing access to education and health, and providing supportive social infrastructure, are needed to address these consequences. Indonesia can take advantage of the demographic bonus while facing the challenges of an aging population with the right approach, creating a sustainable social and economic balance for the future.

Broad and sustainable policies are needed to address these impacts. One way to encourage young couples to marry and have children is to provide financial incentives and family facilities, such as education and housing subsidies. If we want to improve people's quality of life, increasing access to education and health services must be a top priority. To address the difficulties faced by the elderly, the government must also build a strong social security system. Indonesia can ensure sustainable social and economic growth if it can make good use of its demographic bonus.

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