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A Sociological Presentation of Marriage and Family Life in the Western Contemporary World

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Abstract: This paper presents a comprehensive social view about marriage and family life in the contemporary western world. Family and marriage may appear to be familiar themes at first glance. Families exist in all communities and are an integral element of our humanity. However, there is a great deal of cultural difference in how people view family and marriage around the world. Cross-cultural perspectives on how people relate to one another, what form of marriage is desirable, when people should have children, who should care for children, and many other family-related issues differ. While families are designed to meet basic human needs such as providing for children, defining parental duties, regulating sexuality, and passing property and knowledge down through generations, there are many different ways to accomplish these needs. This paper discusses some of the most typical family life patterns observed around the world. It's crucial to keep in mind that within any cultural context, differences do exist. Some variants on the typical pattern fall within the "spectrum of acceptable alternatives" as defined by culture. Other family structures are not universally approved, but most community members would consider them appropriate. For e.g., Family is thought to be the most intact and stable essential unit of any community in Ascombe societies. According to popular belief, an intact family consists of a man and woman married to each other and any children they may have. As a result, they describe marriage as an exclusive and monogamous connection between a man and a woman based on mutual love and aid, to remain so committed until death. In most societies, the state and social custom respect this commitment. The family is in charge of providing the social support that a stable society requires. The optimum setting for raising children is a happy, healthy family that provides them with the love, support, and education they need to succeed in adulthood. As a result, the family is the finest institution for nourishing and rearing future generations, preparing them for the responsibilities that will be required of them as leaders of society in the future.

Keywords: family, marriage, western ideologies, social community, divorce, relationships

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1. Introduction

The growing relativism in a global world and its practical manifestation in utilitarianism incite the desire to reflect on an aspect of the communication system of the Christian message. To talk about communication system is to talk about: the agents of communication, the message, and the canal of communication. In our context, these three elements refer respectively to the Magisterium of the Church and its Receptors or recipients, the Good News, and the methodology, where methodology here means faithfulness to the Tradition (Cheng & Yang, 2021). To its recipients, the first letter of John is very clear, right from the beginning, about the object of its message: «Something which existed since the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with

our own hands, the word of life- this is our theme» (1Jn1,1). (Sear, 2021).

In this introduction of John's first letter, what comes immediately to mind is the Eternity or the everlasting character of the object of his message. In other words, his message's object is a reality that does not change. This reality is both subject and object of tradition. That is the deposit of faith that the Church has the mandate to preserve and hand over from generation to generation. In the theory of the apostolic succession, every Magisterium in time represents an office seen as the continuation of the previous ones by divine command. In other words, the Apostles handed over the sacred deposit of faith, the tradition, to the successive magisterial regimes as custodians (Cheng & Yang, 2021). The tradition of the Church is a very vast domain. We have for example, the liturgy, the doctrines, the government of the Church, the disciplinary rules,

etc... Among the multiple dimensions of the unique deposit of faith, this work has taken the option of focusing on Jesus' teaching on marriage and family life (Cherry, 2021). To be more precise, this work will rediscover Jesus' traditional teaching on marriage and family life and look at whether or not the church has remained faithful to its protection and its teaching over the years. The protection and the teaching in this context mean conservation and interpretation. Our point of reference will be Card. Yves Congar's concept of tradition (Schapendonk et al., 2021).

2. Traditional and New Family Structures

Some years back, the word family had an automatic and conventional meaning in almost all the cultures. That is a father, mother and children. One may also think of normal single parenthood as a result of the death of one of the parents. These are known as nuclear families. In this category is found another model of family which sociologists call blended family. This is created by the remarriage of a widow or a widower. This family is made up of step-siblings and parents. We also have a family comprised of father, mother, children, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather, cousin, living ordinarily in the same house or in some cases in different houses close one to the other. This is referred to as an extended family. The extended model of the family is an important asset for the growth and the stability of the family system in general. It helps in the socio-human education of children and mediates successfully in family conflicts resolution. These beautiful models of the family are well known in history in many parts of the world (Budds, 2021).

In the U.S, the traditional concept of family as a combination of husband, wife, and children is fast fading away. In 1980 the U.S census bureau recorded that 77 percent of American children under seventeen years old live in a household with husband and wife. This percentage decreased to 66 percent in 2010. That is only after twenty years. The decrease of the traditional family model has given birth to many other modern models of the family. Some of these models are: single-parent households, cohabitation households, same-sex unions households, and the choice of staying single. (Thi, 2021). The increase in these new family models constitutes a serious threat to traditional marriage and family institution. Statistics of this increase are very alarming and

troubling. Between 2008 and 2010, according to the U.S. census bureau, single-parent households have jumped from 25 to 27 percent². In the same context, same-sex couples are trying strongly to position themselves as the ideal family model with child adoption to balance their imbalance. From 2000 to 2010, same-sex couple households increased by 50 percent according to U.S. Census Bureau. Figures available in 2010 were 594,000 and represented a 50 percent increase.

Though one of the oldest traditional institutions, Matrimony is seen today to be in evident crisis. In Italy, the 2015 census figures available from ISTAT office revealed a considerable decrease in interest in marriage and family life. According to the document, the year 2015 registered 194,377 marriages against 246,613 in 2008. We have here a difference of 52,236, in less than 10 years. According to Giuseppe Mari, these statistical records on matrimony in Italy are the image of what matrimony has become in Europe. Quoting Eurostat 1965 records, he proved that the rate at which matrimony was celebrated in 28 European countries has fallen to almost 50%, in other words, from 7,8 marriages per 1.000 people to 4,2 in 2011.

The variation in the situation between Africa and the western world convinced us to mostly trace the phenomenon of the decrease of people's interest in matrimony to the high emergence of new family models. Among other things, the emergence of new family models can be understood as a product of two important socio-cultural dynamics: loss of direction and economic hardship. And the option of staying single, in the context of these two socio-cultural dynamisms, seems to be the highest choice of the youth in the western world.

Statistics in this area confirm our statement, especially in large cities and metropolitan areas where privacy is more guaranteed. The U.S. census bureau registered in 2010 a figure of 99,6 million unmarried individuals over age eighteen. This figure represented 44 percent of the total adult population in U.S. that year. The importance of the figures demands that we briefly expose what could, "loss of direction", and "economic hardship", mean in this context.

3. Loss of Direction

As society grows, role models are becoming scarce. This is true too of families who project family values as they used to. Marriage and family life seem not to be attractive to most of the youth at the

threshold of choosing a vocation. Some youths enter marriage and family life as victims of social pressure. Others also go into it just because they want to satisfy their desire to have children. Marriage and family life have largely ceased to be motivated by love and chosen for what it is. Many marriages turned out to be marriages of convenience, far from commitment and lasting joy, which are necessary ingredients for successful marriages. Families trying to save and protect the beauty and the qualities of the institution are seen as traditionalists and even avoided by youths and young couples. The media has become more the point of reference than the noble traditions of those who have gone ahead of us and have lived marriage and family life in honour, joy, and self-fulfilment. In Italy for example a statement like « It is finished, I cannot bear it any more » is sufficient, to formally or informally start, most of the times, a process towards another sad statement: «We have left each other». (Wiik et al., 2021).

And the surprising aspect of it is that, soon after those words have been said, another partner is found the following day as if he or she was awaiting somewhere. The picture out there presents how divorce, separation, and getting a new partner have all become so easy. It is probably because marriage is gradually becoming more a fashion than a lifelong commitment for many. Marriage has slipped into the hands of the media at the mercy of commercial publicity. There is a serious loss of direction, leading marriage and family to conformism. It is very difficult to say whether, in this present state, marriage and family life can still realize their sociological functions and remain good for both society and the family itself. But this is not to say that the whole western world has lost direction. It is equally refreshing, promising, and consoling to hear some mothers in Italy express their pain and sorrow before a collapsed or shaking marriage. They usually use one of the phrases: «We are from another generation and certain things we don't accept them». In this honourable pronouncement of these brave women arises a kind of prestige and faithfulness that have covered marriage and family life in the past, where people see the noble institution as a lifelong choice. The mystery here is that this was not even when women chose their husbands or men chose their own wives. Many of them were given to marry, whether there is love or not. What then kept them faithful to the marriage bond? This question, no matter how simple it may be, opens us to a flashback to identify

a few elements which may have disappeared in the course of times (Oesch & Vigna, 2021).

What comes to mind immediately is the concept of division of roles in the traditional family setup. The past society has defined gender role without ambiguity. At the level of the couple, man was identified as the head of a family with a specific role delegated to him. The woman was identified as the queen of the house with well-defined responsibilities. The man was the breadwinner with the obligation of providing for the family. The woman was to take care of the house through domestic activities. The welfare of the children, the husband, and any visitor, were in her hands. She was to receive orders from the husband and execute them in running the family. Practically, the woman was the one who implemented family policies. From the industrial revolution to our present-day, appeared a paradigm shift. Society has manufactured ideologies over the last centuries. Relativism, feminism, gender issues etc, have permeated society and the sphere of marriage and family life. These various ideologies have weakened the solid foundations of matrimony and family life and left it a vulnerable and fertile ground for women emancipation theories of all kind. With the sentiments of independence and equality, the woman gradually began to reject her role of wife and mother. In trying to define feminism and its relation to family, Michelle Budig says:

Liberal feminists have little to say about women's and men's home responsibilities, so long as women and men have equal opportunities in education and employment. Socialist and Marxist feminists advocate for socializing women's traditional family responsibilities to free them up for employment and political activism. Radical feminists debate whether the family is the source of women's oppression or the means to her liberation. Social/Cultural feminists claim that the wisdom women gain through their traditional family roles can provide the antidote to patriarchy. The effects of feminist movements on family life have been interpreted positively (rape in marriage is now deemed illegal in most Westernized countries) and negatively (high rates of divorce and single parenthood are sometimes attributed to "women's liberation").

These definitions of feminism make the family concept very difficult to define and to live as it opens the door to relativism. The concept of the family becomes to each person what he or she

thinks it is. Michelle Budig will say in this context: « Definitions of the family are as diverse as feminist positions on the family ». The traditional family concept has become the property of a few, named negatively as traditionalists.

4. Economic Hardship

Left at the mercy of the media and commercial publicity, marriage and family life seem to have lost everything except its festive dimension. The cost of, wedding suit, rings, refreshment, hotel for honeymoon, seem to be in this modern time the essential preoccupations associated with the celebration of matrimony. The thought of this makes matrimony scary to many youths. Already unemployment remains the first obstacle to deal with. Consumerism has managed its way into the culture and has introduced and imposed new prescriptions for the dowry. In Italy today there is no mention of dowry. The new practice is that the man buys the house where the new couple is to live and the woman furnishes the house. No matter the model, its cost makes many youths postpone their marriages even indefinitely. (Kumar & Sharma, n.d.).

In most European countries today, unemployment remains a great factor to family insecurity and for that matter has become, to a large extent, a serious obstacle to engagement for marriage and family life. The fear of not being able to respond to the minimum of the family's material demands is a concern to many youths at the threshold of deciding for marriage. The decision to remain single in this situation is very easy to take. Moreover, this is not a culture that sees something wrong with that state. We find here elements of answers to the why of the alarming figures above concerning people's hesitation to embrace the vocation of marriage and family life. Very few youths today have a stable work. Many are they who work on contract basis, at the mercy of employers. This situation of precarity in the work sector is a menace to family security and does not favour, peace, joy, and harmony in family. Even things are not easy for some of the youths who are fortunate to have a stable employment. Let us take, for example, a young Italian whose salary is 1,200 Euro a month. The simple accommodation he could rent costs 700 or 800 Euro a month. He is left with 400 Euro. He is to pay out of this, electricity and water bills. His feeding, his daily transportation to work, and any other basic expenditure must all come from the remaining 400

Euro. How is this young man going to cater for a family if he should create one? This is how economic hardship comes in as one of the obstacles to embracing marriage and family life. This is a very important social issue one cannot easily downplay.

5. Divorce

In the past, divorce was seen as a disgrace. It was a disgrace to the divorced couple itself, their parents, and to their close friends. This tells us how hostile was the culture to divorce. Society till the 1970s and 1980s disgraced divorced families. Stigma was attached to that social status. Traditionally, family conflict resolution mechanisms were put in place and were very effective in saving and protecting families from collapsing.

The collapse of many traditional structures happened together with that of many traditional values. The absence of conflict management mechanisms gave birth to an unprecedented rate of divorce, especially in the western world. Divorce in France is largely a protest against the traditional or conventional form of marriage. R. LIBERMAN reported a study of answers from a questionnaire addressed to 18,500 readers of the n° 8 of F. Magazine of 1978, which specified that 7 over 10 readers confirmed this reality. 20% of these figures want a free union and the remaining 50% are calling for a new formulation of matrimony. France ministry of justice published a high statistic of 96,000 divorces for the first 7 months of 1978 in the n° 1819 of Quotidien du Médecin . These various statistics are very far from giving marriage and family institution credit in terms of performance. (Kim-Bossard & Badenhorst, 2022).

In Italy, L'ISTAT's records give very sad statistics about the rates of both separations and divorces. From 2008 to 2015, the rate of separations has increased from 84.165 to 91.706. While that of divorces in the same period, also went up from 54.351 to 82.469 divorces. That is a big jump of 28.118 divorces more. This situation is not peculiar to Italy but it reflects the image of the situation in Europe. According to Eurostat, in 28 countries in Europe, the rate of divorce has increased from 1965 to 2011, from 0,8 per population of 1000 to 2 divorces per population of 1000.

6. Economic Difficulties

It would be a great omission to talk about the evident causes of divorce these days without making mention of the economic difficulties families are exposed to. These difficulties are aggravated by the loss of job and inadequate salaries or wages. Peace and joy in the family are first of all granted and guaranteed by a minimum of auto-sufficiency of the family. A common saying is that « a hungry man is an angry man ». This is almost the same reality our research discovered within the family sector too. In this context it is easy to say that a hungry family is an angry family. It will be a miracle to see family members, in which daily bread is always a problem, being happy and enjoying peaceful communication among themselves.

Today, it is common knowledge that poverty and financial difficulties are some of the main sources of family conflicts that lead directly or indirectly to divorce. A good preparation towards marriage as it used to be in the past, should be able to equip husband and wife as to how to manage hardship as it comes. It seems to be very difficult for husband and wife these days to sit down and dialogue in times of economic hardship. Patience and temporal endurance have lost their place to impatience and fear of the future. This lack of dialogue renders families vulnerable to divorce. Most of the time, some women conclude that their husbands cannot respond to their family's needs and choose divorce as the way out. This is because they close their ears to dialogue and give reason to the French statement « Empty stomach has no ears ». One of the symptoms that things are going to get out of hand is when the woman starts going around to complain: «He doesn't give me market money any more ». In this context, members of some families become very vulnerable to social vices, especially conjugal infidelity as a means of getting money to supplement family expenditures. And this usually leads to divorce, when the second partner gets to know or suspects it.

7. Absence of Traditional Preparation towards Marriage and Family Life

Every society today will forever miss the way, traditionally, culture took care of the necessary preparation of young men and women at the threshold of marriage and family life. The picture on the ground presents a kind of social permissiveness. Traditional preparation towards marriage seems to be given very little room. Values

which were required before marriage are no more taught as they used to be. The few times parents interact with future husbands or wives, are when they have the opportunity to meet at lunch or supper. Those of them who are lucky to get counselling in their churches learn little. The collapse of family structures who take care of this important traditional pre-marital moment has left a big vacuum. And after marriage, young couples are mostly left on their own. Their post-marital counsellors become their peers who, like them, also lack experience. Managing family life and its challenges become difficult. Divorce in many cases becomes the inevitable consequence of marital challenges not well dealt with or unattended to.

8. Children of Divorced Parents

Children of divorced parents usually pay the heavy price of the unfortunate divorce of their parents. Their resettlement or where they should stay becomes a court matter. Whether they should live with their father or their mother depends on the outcome of a court decision. They will have loved to live together with their two parents, but the situation imposes on them a choice they never made or would never have thought of. Critical observations have shown that parental marital status seems to be a significant indicator of advancement in a child's life. Unfortunately, according to the U.S. census bureau, the single parent households are on the rise in the United States of America as a result of divorce. From 2008 to 2010 the percentage of American children living in single-parent households jumped from 25 to 27 percent. The difference of 2 percent record in a two-year interval is alarming. According to statistics, these same sources confirmed that children living in homes with both parents grow up with more financial and educational advantages than children raised in single-parent homes. The worst of it are cases where children live with adoptive parent-households or with their grandparents or extended family relations. (Aman et al., 2019).

These children face emotional and psychological disturbances which affect them at their various developmental stages. Their academic performance and their socialization are affected. Some of them grow up with a negative attitude towards marriage. They refuse to marry and have children because they don't want their children to experience the trauma they have gone through. And they themselves do not want to go through

their parents' experiences. Psychologists agreed on the fact that divorce has a negative impact on children. Some of these researchers are much more concerned by the side effects than the divorce itself. Romain Liberman expressed this preoccupation very clearly when he writes: «As a human being, I don't have any problem with divorce at social, moral or philosophical levels. But I am confronted everyday with its negative impacts on the development of children of victim couples». One may have wished that instead of lamenting on the faith of the children of divorced families, it will be more meaningful for this author to condemn rather the divorce itself, which is the cause of pain and sorrow innocent children have to bear or go through. But what he meant in his further development was that divorce will be less disastrous and easy to manage, if it takes place in a situation where couples have no children. This is because of the psychological maturity of the two protagonists.

9. Love and Marriage

We prefer the title love and marriage instead of love in marriage, to embrace both what happens before and after marriage. Two cultural practices in marriage will help address this preoccupation, namely "love marriages" and "arranged marriages". While love marriage is a modern practice in the culture of marriage, arranged marriage remains a universally old and traditional practice in which a man and woman come together to settle as husband and wife through the arrangement of their parents.

In arranged marriage culture does not see marriage as something private to the couple. Marriage goes beyond the boundary of the two individuals who enter into family life relationship. It brings together two or more families into a very strong and lasting social, cultural, and fraternal relationship. Every member of this new relationship becomes a watchdog over what has been the source of their coming together with others, the marriage of their children. The focus of arranged marriage is success and stability (both taken as connected in a unique reality) of the marriage and the family life generated by that marriage. So, parents do a background check of the family into which their son or daughter is going to marry. For common people, the elements this background check is looking for are: cultural and religious values. For the bourgeoisie class, the check is extended to educational and economic

domains, in other words, to the social status. What is being targeted here is compatibility, so that security and stability can be guaranteed in the future family.

S. Chandrashekar talking about the effort required from each partner says «once the wedding happens, there is a tremendous need for adjustment. Each partner will have to learn to understand and accommodate the other and begin to appreciate the good things in the relationship». At the same time, she is aware of points raised by critics of arranged marriage who think that, in that marriage: Emotional and physical compatibility are overlooked in favour of practical considerations. If you say I don't feel anything for him/her, family members might respond saying "love will grow in time". Another drawback is that the couple might not have enough time to get to know each other, understand each other's feelings, values and options, about different issues.

Western modern culture predominantly opted for love marriage as a result of freedom and right. The excessive self-confidence leads many people to do things the way they want, without reference to other people's experience or guidance. Love marriage seems to be the manifestation of such sentiment. Based on their personal judgment, people define their criteria to fit their vision, emotions, and physical compatibility. They use this scope to choose their soul mate and go ahead to marry, carrying behind a lot of dreams and high expectations. The difficulty or even the incapacity to realize these dreams after marriage renders their matrimony vulnerable and very fragile. S. Chandrashekar defining love marriage says:

Love marriage allows us to freely choose our mate, to find someone we are intellectually, emotionally and physically attracted to. We build a life with them on our terms and make our own happiness. [...]. People enter love marriage with a lot of expectations. The most common is that those passionate, romantic feelings you are feeling now will still stay the same for the rest of your life. After the first few months when the honeymoon stage is over and the mundane realities of marriage have set in, people begin to feel dissatisfied wondering if their partner still loves them. [...]. Even though we have known our partners well before marriage, being married and living together is a whole new experience which will have its own ups and downs.

The psychological pain attached to this moment, if it happens, is that people have to develop the

capacity of taking responsibility of what they are going through. Because nobody is to be blame for their free choice. The process that is leading to the choice has not usually done any background check, especially, cultural and religious. Adjustment in this context is very difficult. Cultural and religious values are things that, basically, shape the individual, and give him a character to live by. Incompatibility at those levels is very difficult to manage. The high rate of divorce in the western world alerts us on the risk involved in love marriage. Many get depressed and fall into serious mental and psychological disturbances after divorce.

10. Family and Procreation

To marry and to procreate has been the noble aspiration of every young man and woman who has reached the threshold of choosing marriage and family life as a life style. Consciously or unconsciously, we have let it get into our minds that stages in human life are: get educated, get a job, get married and form a family. It is generally very difficult to explain why one should bear children. Culture has planned it that way and individuals must conform. Believing and adhering to this social philosophy is signing one's free choice of life style. That is accepting to become father or mother with its socio-cultural responsibilities.

For culture itself, child-bearing confers a very important social status. Parenthood comes as an achievement, as it moves the person who gives birth from one social class to another, from youth to responsible adulthood. Regardless of the economic and educational status it makes the new father or mother feels a complete man or woman. For Linda, the reason why people choose to procreate could be economical, social, biological, cultural, political, familial and personal. Our society's social ideology that we must all have an education, get a job, get married and have children leaves people yearning to conform to this ideology. We find that our culture and personal motives have a huge impact on our childbearing patterns as a society.

It happens that, some, after marriage, are blessed with children, when others are not. How does society look at families without children? How does the couple, their families, and their close friends accept this phenomenon and how do they manage it? Social and family reactions differ from culture to culture and from place to place. It is a fact that no culture accepts kindly the reality of marrying

without having children. Having children or childlessness are seen as a blessing or a curse according to cultures and places. Serious studies have begun to turn attention to this social phenomenon as its social and cultural consequences have been seen to be very disastrous to the institution of marriage and family life. Statistics available reveal figures like 70- 80 million couples worldwide currently infertile.

The effects of childlessness touch almost every sphere of human life. It has mainly, economic, social, cultural, and psychological effects on the victim couples and those who are close to them. Childlessness causes distress, raised depression and anxiety levels. Victim couples suffer lower self-esteem, feelings of blame and guilt. These effects some times are so pronounced that they even get to a clinical level. Studies show that in Europe, for a small minority of women and men, these effects are at a clinical level or can be considered extremely serious.

Generally, couples at societal levels suffer what many sociologists call "status loss", "social failure" and, as a consequence, have no respect. Old people in this situation live in total or partial economic insecurity. They have less support because they are childless and receive almost no gifts. Some would have to see to their own shopping, fetch water, clean their surroundings, when energy and strength have left them. some women suffer harassment from the part of in-laws. They are abused and exploited, working excessively. Sociologists made mention of the concept of «legal and marriage effect». This is a practice which has revealed so many social injustices in our families regarding inheritance. Childless people are not given fair treatment when it comes to the sharing of inheritance. Some family members do go as far as denying them completely their right. The pathetic case is when in a childless couple the husband died and his family members throw the woman out of the house and confiscate all that she and the man have spent their lives to build.

Childlessness also causes a marital instability. Women, in this case live in the constant fear of their husband either divorcing them or taking a second wife. This often happens in areas where people still believe that childlessness is always the fault of the woman. People in those areas do not believe the man's infertility.

It is consoling to know, like researches are saying, that the international community is coming to the

assistance of these helpless childless couples. V. BALEN and H. M.W. BOS confirm this hope saying: Over the last decade, a substantial number of papers have been published about the social consequences of being childless in poor resource areas. This subject is thus getting at least some of the attention that was promised in the action plan of the International Conference of Population and Development in Cairo (ICPD, 1994), which for the first time included infertility care in its goals for reproductive health.

But it must be noted that the effects of childlessness do not have the same severe level everywhere. No matter how lesser are some effects, the fact remains that childlessness produces effects in almost every society and every culture. And these effects have very negative consequences on human dignity. It presents culture as putting procreation first in marriage and family life. As much as the picture coming out reveals procreation as the primordial social function of marriage, it will be good, human beings should not become slaves to their function. If the society, the culture, and the international community do not wake up quickly to this phenomenon, from its beauty, marriage will fall into a dehumanizing institution. But while some are suffering from their childlessness, some others are using drugs, either to prevent themselves from giving birth or to limit their fertility.

11. Family and Contraceptives

The family has seriously become the battle field for class struggle. Beijing 1995 declared the family as a battle field, between husband and wife, where, the husband exercises his dominion over the wife. And one of the ways through which man achieves his suppressive goal of dominion over the woman is maternity. Maternity therefore has been presented as a form of oppression of the man over the woman. So, in the name of human right many beautiful concepts were coined under the pretext of freeing women from men's dominion. Among these concepts was that of "reproductive health" which came, as we mentioned earlier on, as another definition of human right and includes the right to contraceptives.

This ideology travelled very fast to force women, worldwide, to believe that contraception and abortion were their human right. Huge amounts of money have been invested for serious campaigning. Various theories have been elaborated and preached to convince people. The concept of reproductive health has been very well

supported by theories psychologically linked with development and welfare of both women and families and even countries and continents. Examples of such theories state: « it is claimed that a woman's ability to space and limit her pregnancies has a direct impact on her health and children's health. Moreover, the contraceptive usage has an important role in the decline of such problems as unintended pregnancy and abortion ». Another one says: family planning (FP) plays a pivotal role in population control, poverty reduction, and human development. Robust FP services have a range of benefits, including maternal and infant survival, better nutrition, increases educational attainment, a stronger position of girls and women at home and society, prevention of sexually transmittable diseases (STDs), and environmental conservation.

Unfortunately, situations on the ground reveal a serious lack of respect for human life in favour of money, and the destruction of the family. Many women in both rural and urban centers end up developing strange illnesses after their 40s and 50s among those using contraceptives. In most cases health agents are unable to give them assistance because of the difficulty of explaining causes and origins of their illness. These innocent women spend their times moving from one hospital to the other till they become very poor, miserable, hopeless and helpless and die. It is very easy to access the negative impacts on families. The initial joy and serenity are, in many cases, taken away from victim women and their family members. But still the situation on the ground reveals that adverts and publicities continue to keep many women, consciously or unconsciously, slaves to the usage of contraceptives. The situation is worsened by governments' complicity in adopting and incorporating the practice as national policy under the pressure of international organizations. Serious available studies denounced the dehumanizing condition in which some of the contraceptive methods are imposed and practiced on people in some places. One typical example is how, in 1976, in India, the law ordained the sterilization of 6 million of women for a period of 6 months. To talk about this, is to make mention, also, of the sad experiences of rural and urban populations of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Europe in that domain.

12. Cohabitation

Cohabitation, in sociological understanding, refers to a man and woman who have come together to live as husband and wife without any official traditional marriage rite. So, society does not officially recognize them as married people. Sociologists define it as « living together before or in lieu of marriage ». The U.S. census bureau's data recorded in 2011, up to 7.5 million people (a percentage of 11.5 percent) of the American population, living in cohabitation. This percentage reports an increase of 13 percent since 2009. M. Giuseppe confirmed the rise of the phenomenon also in Italy. He strongly stated that « Surely, the diffusion of cohabitation constitutes a phenomenon in many ways unpublished ». One of the main reasons for this rise is the fact that the stigma attached to this state of life seems not to be there anymore in the western world. Unofficially, the phenomenon has come to stay as normal.

Human life at every level is influenced by the economy of the living environment. The global economy today dictates the cost of living in every country. High cost of living is a general situation facing nations, families and individuals. People's incomes are practically consumed by basic needs like: accommodation, electricity and water bills, health, food, education etc ... which have become very costly today. Only few people can afford the cost of these basic needs today in the world. The majority of people goes through serious sacrifices to keep life going. And this has generated a common belief among many youths that only one salary cannot make it. This situation has rushed, willingly or unwillingly, many youths into cohabitation with the hope that in two they could stand the weight of the rising cost of living. To others who are not employed, especially young ladies, it is a way of getting support from the opposite sex who at least has something at hand. In this case, they see and justify their cohabitation as "trial run" for marriage. But no scientific research has yet proved that couples who have experienced cohabitation succeed better in marriage and family life than couples who married regularly. The proof is that some cohabitating couples even remain without getting properly married till old age and death.

13. Education of Children

Two of the four universal residual functions of the family are: reproductive and educational. Society has it, as natural constitution, that once children

are born, it is the family's responsibility to consciously take care of their education. Education here means helping children to acquire all the needed aptitudes and attitudes to integrate into society successfully. Each child is a projection of his or her family in society. And society, in its turn offers the picture of the kinds of families it comprises. Unfortunately, there are factors rendering education of children, relatively, very difficult today.

Many parents are doing their best to train and give their children a good education. Where the traditional extended family system is still operating, children also get education from relatives and other extended family members. It is very rare in a traditional context, not to achieve a good and acceptable level of human education of children. Nuclear families today, for one reason or the other, find it difficult to stand alone the challenges of the education of their children. Children are bombarded by the media with information not too favourable to their moral and human growth. And most parents lack the material time to accompany their children in discernment. Work and its related demands put so much pressure on the majority of parents. In big cities, because of road traffic, parents who work have to leave the house very early in the morning and come back very late in the night. And this goes on the whole week, the whole month, and the whole year. It is a fact that, where family members' interactions are not at their excellent level, the education of children suffers. In some cases, even, children are left, from infancy, to the care of maids or house girls who have no skill for education. This is how, unfortunately, many children become their own educators. School mates and televisions are their coaches. The situation on the ground shows that the education of children today has lost its social dimension. International communities have shown concern by elaborating policies to enhance family welfare. The role of the family welfare has been defined as far as 1965 by the U.N as follows:

The primary purpose of all family welfare programs is to strengthen the internal unity and safeguard the integrity of the family, to support and enhance the capacities of parents and other family members, and to facilitate the participation of the family in the economic and social life of the community. Particularly in developing countries, such programs might include, broadly speaking, education and counselling activities to improve childcare and parent-child relations and to

promote family adjustment of changing conditions....

Unfortunately, the family is scattered today more than ever. Policies are there but the problem has always been with their implementation. After school, the majority of children have only mobile phones as companions. Values and role models to emulate have become what WhatsApp and televisions offer. Morality or depravation is learnt according to the kind of films children watch. Character in this context is shaped by social media.

According to S. DEX:

The nature of these changes means that, compared with the mid-twentieth century, overlapping family time has been squeezed by the combination of growth in unsocial hours of work, weekend work, outsourced child-care, and parents taking shifts at caring for children. Surveys suggest that parents are not entirely happy about the current state of affairs. Changes in parents' structuring and valuation of time and the valuations of paid and unpaid activities have been occurring. The driver from the employer side has come from pressures to raise income partly from a decline in some men's real earnings and probably in part from aspirations for increased consumption. These changes have put pressure on many parents. For men, the changes have contributed to growing insecurity and worsening employment prospects, and for young men, they are having implications for their family formation. [...]. Outcomes for children from parents working cover several areas; their education and ability, their emotional development, and, to a lesser extent, the use of illegal substances and other criminal activities.

Social difficulties have forced parents to take extra jobs outside their normal working hours in some cases. And a major part of the weekend is spent doing extra work to have additional income, as a supplement, to sustain the family. This arrangement has become necessary for many because the cost of living is getting higher and higher. In a situation where the parents opted for this arrangement, the maid or house girl, or even in some cases, neighbours keep the children company till parents are back. In some cases, only one of the parents is engaged in extra work. But it does happen that sometimes both husband and wife are engaged. With this situation, some parents just come home tired and seriously stressed that they could not do anything other than the bed. This

really means that not all parents are culpable or irresponsible when it comes to child education.

But it will be very misleading, if we do not make mention of the existence of parents who are equally irresponsible. Parents of this category are those who do not just have the moral courage to say "No" to their children when they go wrong. They are more afraid of their children getting angry than growing without acquiring minimum human values that will help them withstand the challenges of life. These are parents who always say "bravo" for whatever children do. They are so protective that they do not even allow other people to correct their children. Some go as far as confronting teachers who have the courage to correct their children in school. Because of their attitude, many teachers have reduced their teaching activities to focusing only on children's cognitive level.

Another group in this category of irresponsible parents is that of teenage parenthood. The worst situation in this category is when both parents are really underage. It is a natural law that no one can offer what he or she does not have. If parents lack education, what can they hand to their children regarding education or social values? In this context, both parents and children become social liabilities to be managed by society (Costa, 2018).

14. Conclusion

Family and marriage institutions can be found in all countries and are part of cultural understandings of how the world should work. In every culture, there are acceptable variances and situations in which people fall short of the ideal. Although the way people build families varies widely from one country to the next, common patterns may be traced back to economics, religion, and other cultural and environmental influences. The study of families and marriage is an essential element of anthropology because family and household groups play a key role in shaping interpersonal interactions and ensuring that society functions. While there is no biological requirement for a family group to be arranged in a certain way, our cultural expectations lead us to believe in "natural" family structures. As civilizations evolve, so do people's perceptions of family.

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