

A Relational Dialectic Analysis in the Discourse of Life Choices of Professional Women

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the relational dialectics perspective in the discourse of professional women's life choices. This research employs a qualitative approach with interview and observation methods. The results show that several factors influence professional women's decisions to delay marriage, including the Sandwich Generation, career, and mental readiness. This study finds that professional women prioritize their role as family supporters, economic stability through their careers, and mental readiness before deciding to get married. These findings provide insight into the relational dynamics of professional women in making decisions about their life choices.



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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the important aspects of human life which is often considered a starting point for couples to build a life together. However, in recent decades, the phenomenon of marriage postponement has increased, especially among professional women. Rapid social and economic changes have influenced individuals' views and behaviors in making decisions about marriage.

In modern reality, the phenomenon of women delaying or even choosing not to marry is an issue that is increasingly discussed. These changes can occur through a long process that is influenced by many factors such as professional demands, social expectations, and the development of digital media.

"Data shows a significant decline in the number of marriages between 2018 and 2023. This decline is linked to an increasing tendency to postpone marriage, which is influenced by environmental factors and growing fears about marriage. The complex interpersonal relationship dynamics play an important role in an individual's decision to get married, considering various aspects before making a decision. This decline in marriage rates can be an indicator of changes in people's values and perceptions of marriage and interpersonal relationships."

Today's professional women face complex challenges in making their life choices. In today's era, women face different challenges compared to previous generations. They are not only required to succeed in the field of work, but also faced social pressure to get married and start a family. The tension between social demands and personal achievements is what creates a dilemma in making life choices.

On the one hand, they have the opportunity to pursue careers and develop themselves professionally in various fields of work (Maryani, T., Handayani, N. S., & Julianti, A. 2024:14). On the other hand, they also face social pressure to get married and start a family. The tension between social demands and personal achievements is what creates a dilemma in making life choices.

Relational dialectics is a relevant concept in understanding the dynamics of professional women's life choices. Baxter and Montgomery in this concept explain that interpersonal relationships are characterized by the dynamics of tension between conflicting impulses, such as autonomy vs connection, openness vs privacy, and stability vs spontaneity. In the context of marriage, professional women must manage these tensions in making decisions about their life choices.

This study shows that the dynamics of professional women's life choices in the context of marriage are influenced by internal and external factors, including social identity, dual roles, and social pressures. Professional women have the opportunity to achieve economic independence and strengthen their professional identity, but also face challenges in balancing personal and professional lives.

The dynamics of professional women's life choices in the context of marriage are influenced by internal and external factors, including social identity, dual roles, and social pressures. . According to Afrilia and Arifina (2020: 7) Interpersonal communication is a two-way interaction process between individuals that influence, build, and maintain relationships. Professional women have the opportunity to achieve economic independence and strengthen their professional identity, but also face challenges in balancing personal and professional lives. Thus, understanding the complexities of interpersonal relationships and decision-making processes can help professional women make wiser and more effective decisions in their lives.

Decision-making is an important process that forms the basis for conscious and directed human activity. This process has several basic assumptions and concepts as the foundation for propositions in building decision-making theories. In the decision-making process, there are several factors that influence, such as the position or position, the problems or issues faced, the situation and conditions, and the goals to be achieved (Pasolong, 2023). These factors are interrelated and affect the overall decision-making process.

Social identity plays an important role in shaping individual decisions and behaviors in social contexts. Social identity is a concept that describes how an individual views himself or herself as part of a social group, which is formed through interaction with the work environment and societal norms. Individuals tend to build a positive self-image through their membership in certain groups, and this social identity also influences an individual's decision regarding marriage.

Professional women face the challenge of dual roles involving domestic and career responsibilities. This phenomenon often causes inequality of access to strategic positions known as glass ceilings. However, the identity of professional women can be articulated as a social construct that helps shape the perspective and orientation of single women's lives. Thus, professional women can build a strong and independent identity, as well as improve their ability to manage dual roles and achieve success in their careers.

Life choices are complex topics that involve different aspects of life, such as influencing factors, decision-making processes, consequences and risks, growth and learning, identity and identity, social engagement, and the balance between freedom and responsibility. By understanding these aspects, individuals can make wiser and more effective decisions in their lives. One example of a significant life choice is marriage, which can be considered as one way to fulfill developmental tasks in adulthood, which is to build intimacy and avoid isolation.

Thus, marriage plays an important role in shaping individual lives and relationships. Based on the above background, this study aims to further analyze the dynamics of professional women's life choices in the context of marriage using a relational dialectical perspective. By understanding how professional women manage their social lives and make important decisions such as whether or not to marry, this research is expected to contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of professional women's life choices and the factors influencing their decisions

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RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative analysis methods to understand in depth the complexities of interpersonal relationships and decision-making processes that influence professional women's life choices, with the aim of gaining richer and contextual insights into the dynamics that occur in their lives. The study took place between July and August 2025.

The technique for determining informants in this study is the purposive sampling technique, informants are deliberately selected based on criteria that are in accordance with the purpose of the research. The intended criteria are female, single, at least 25 years old, education at least D3, and active

in work, business and the like. The informants in this study were four people. They vary based on their work background, as described below:

No	Name	Gender	Age	Final Education	Position	Marital Status	Long Time Working
1	Azhar Haaniyah	Woman	25	D3	Admin	Single	5 Years
2	Maratin Sholihah	Woman	30	S1	Finance Pajak	Single	11 Years
3	Nabila Nurjanah	Woman	27	S1	Financial Manager	Single	9 Years
4	Mufidah	Woman	25	S1	Accountant	Single	6 Years

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Professional Female Decision-Making

The development of technology and science has brought about a significant change in women's mindset, allowing them to be more independent and have wider opportunities in education and careers. Women now have more options and are no longer limited by strict social demands. Many women are choosing to postpone marriage and focus more on their career development, indicating a shift in the priorities and values embraced by the current generation of women.

Professional women face the challenge of dual roles involving domestic and career responsibilities. This phenomenon often causes inequality of access to strategic positions, known as glass ceilings. However, dual roles also open up opportunities to achieve economic independence and strengthen women's professional identities.

The identity of professional women can be articulated as a social construct that also shapes the perspective and orientation of single women's lives, especially in terms of increasing self-confidence, determining life priorities, positive perception of oneself, and independence in building social relationships. Thus, professional identity not only represents a role in the realm of work, but also becomes an important element in the process of formulating personal decisions and the direction of single women's lives.

Decision-making is an important process that is the foundation for conscious and directed human activity. According to Sadikin et al (2020: 88), the decision-making function includes two main aspects: first, as the starting point of all structured human activities, both at the individual, group, and organizational level; second, decision-making has a long-term impact, as decisions taken today will affect the future and sustainability of an entity over a long period of time.

In decision-making, several factors that affect the overall include the position or position, the problems or issues faced, the situation and conditions, and the goals to be achieved. These factors are interrelated and affect the overall decision-making process, so it's important to consider all of these aspects in making effective and informed decisions.

Postponing the Wedding

In this part of the discussion, the author will describe the results of the research obtained from field analysis through interviews and observations. Based on the factors that influence professional women's decision-making according to Putri (2022), this study found that Sandwich Generation, career, education, mental readiness, and partner criteria are significant factors in determining the discourse of professional women's life choices.

1. Sandwich Generation

This research shows that some informants who are part of the Sandwich Generation choose to postpone marriage because of a desire to prioritize the happiness and well-being of parents or families.

According to Hoyt, 2022 where the financial responsibility carried out by the second generation is described as a sandwich so it is called the sandwich generation. This is in line with Mufida (25) who said that maybe I was told to make my parents happy first, I didn't need to get married in a hurry. This statement suggests that external factors, such as family responsibilities and obligations to parents, can be a major consideration in determining life decisions, including postponing marriage.

2. Career

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it can be concluded that professional women prioritize career development and long-term planning to achieve financial independence and personal freedom. They prepare for potential risks in marriage, such as divorce or the loss of a spouse, by building a strong economic foundation and not relying on others. Nabila (25) who said that women think a lot about their careers and the second is whether this couple wants to cooperate or not, shows that career is an important factor in determining professional women's life decisions.

3. Education

Education is not a significant factor in determining professional women's decision to postpone marriage. Based on the results of the interviews, most informants are more focused on other goals such as making parents or families happy, careers, and preparing mentally rather than continuing education. Although there are some informants who have postponed a serious relationship because they are studying in the past, this is not the main reason to postpone marriage at this time. Mufida, 25, who recounted his past experiences, showed that the decision to postpone the marriage was more influenced by other factors such as improving himself and starting a new one. Thus, education is not the main factor in determining the discourse of professional women's life choices in the context of postponing marriage.

4. Mental Readiness

Mental readiness is one of the important factors to consider before deciding to get married. Nabila (27) said that we prepare mentally as well, and then we also prepare for parenting if we have children. This statement suggests that good mental preparedness can help couples to be better prepared for various situations that may arise in marriage. In line with Nabila's statement, according to Putri (2022), one of them is mental readiness, namely: "For some women, fear of emotional risk and traumatic experiences in the past can cause doubt to enter into more serious relationship commitments, such as marriage. The threat of divorce and the potential for domestic violence are often the deciding factors that make them prefer to postpone marriage, with the aim of protecting emotional stability and ensuring personal safety. In doing so, they seek to avoid potential harm and build a safer foundation for life."

5. Couple Criteria

In the author's analysis through interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the criteria for informant spouses are not specifically mentioned, such as spouses must have higher incomes, spouses must have higher education, and spouses must be financially established. However, the informant only mentioned in general terms that they wanted to get a partner who could understand, cooperate with each other in the marriage and could guide him in a better direction.

Thus, this study shows that Sandwich Generation, career, and mental readiness are significant factors in determining the discourse of professional women's life choices in postponing marriage. In this study, it shows that professional women have different desires and needs but still have the same goal, namely wanting marriage in their lives, having a life partner and finding a partner according to their expectations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been described in the Analysis of Relational Dialectics in the Discourse on Professional Women's Life Choices, it can be concluded that professional women tend to postpone marriage due to factors such as family responsibilities, career development, and mental readiness. They prioritize family happiness, financial independence, and personal freedom before deciding to get married. Education is not the top priority in their decision, but rather focuses on goals such as making a family happy, career development, and mental preparation.

In choosing a partner, they prioritize the quality of a harmonious relationship and a partner who can work together and guide them towards a better life. Thus, professional women have a unique approach to determining their life choices, which are influenced by a variety of different factors and priorities.

This research still has limitations, so further research is needed, especially on the development of life choice discourse in society. The study is still limited to women who choose to postpone marriage, so women who decide not to marry are a potential topic to be researched, in addition to the topic of stigma directed at those who choose to postpone marriage.

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