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Hastening the Marriage Decision for the Pregnant Woman

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Abstract: Choosing a spouse is a very important process in the life of the individual. This choice influences marital harmony or disharmony and for this reason, the decision should be made after a sufficient period of knowing the partner. Moreover, the decision to marry should be the synthesis of concrete experiences that show how the partner reacts in the concrete situations of life, how the partner reacts to the needs of the other, what is the level of participation in the joint actions of the couple and, of course, how they react in situations of stress. But, beyond the "theories", the elections are often the effect of the emotion of the moment, an effect of the immediate need for fusion or an effect of the culture of the reference community. Thus, although the choices seem to be free, they receive influences from the families of origin, from the reference group or from the culture of the community of which an individual is a part. The study aims to investigate the situation of culturally imposed marriages due to the woman's condition of being pregnant before marriage. With cultural imperatives like "get married because you're embarrassing us!" or "get married because there is a risk that the man will leave you!", some of the pregnant women accept the haste of marriage. The study is based on the analysis of official documents, which are divorce files from the period when the Family Code was into force.

Keywords: *marriage; pregnancy; marital couple.*

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1. Introduction

The choice of the marital partner is sometimes viewed in the specialized literature in terms of strategy. The nature of things makes us, rather, think about the social system of which the individual is a part, about their way of socialization, about the way of thinking about a relationship, about possible traditional imperatives, if we refer to an archaic space or to a system in which social evolution has not completely forgotten customs, habits and the families of origin still have the power to influence the behavior of young people. On the other hand, self-evaluation, personal values and those generally accepted in a community can be criteria to be taken into account in terms of marital selection. From the perspective of the individual anchored in modernity, the emotional "variables", the status, or homogamy are criteria that are the basis of marital selection. A first remark in this issue should start from the degree of traditionality / modernity possessed by an individual and, at the same time, the degree in which family influences become important for young people.

Marital selection in traditionalist societies seemed simple. It was the direct expression of the family's will, which had the power to manage all resources in this regard. And because the traditional family centered all its functions around the economic one, the selection of a future partner did not lose sight of the material aspects of a marriage. Disinheritance was quite a threat for young people, one that considerably reduced the chances of marriage for several reasons: the lack of dowry to negotiate a marriage, the lack of resources for subsistence and the harsh criticism of the community. On top of this, there was also the recommendation of the Church which, as early as 1652, established in the "Book of Teaching" punishments for those who disregarded the will of the parents regarding marriage: "If the child has a father and takes marriage without the consent and advice of his father, he shall not have the right to their father's favors" (Chelaru, 2003, p. 44). The social studies undertaken in the first half of the last century by Xenia Costaforu show a way in which young people could take advantage of the "imperfection" of traditional imperatives to marry according to their own desires. A phenomenon known as the "kidnapping of virgins", which implied kidnapping a girl for a short period of time, was the only way in which young people could enforce the rules in their own interest: *"he was good, but I loved Toader U. And although he was rich and good, my people didn't want him. Then, before the marriage arranged by my parents, I ran to the hills and stayed there until they wanted me to take Toader"* ... or *"...I didn't want to, but one day Dumitru*

brought my girl into the house and slept with her in bed at night, and the next day the same, for a week until I was ashamed of the village and went to A. and I made him godfather. I married them on Sunday. They lived well..." (Costaforu, 2005, pp. 90-91).

Opposite to it, the modern family emphasizes emotional values, intimacy, equality, sexual satisfaction, access to one's own decisions, the absence or presence of children in the family (Huidu, 2018; 2019), the way of socialization etc. Through the prism of these values, marital selection will have a change of perspective compared to the traditional environment (Sandu & Damian, 2018; Necula et al., 2018). However, we could not say that the modern way of choosing a marriage partner totally excludes elements from traditional optics. Even today, parental consent is an important factor in this process, and in other communities, the negotiation of marriages for under aged children is still practiced.

Physical attractiveness is one of the visible factors of marital selection. Although it is never the only criterion for choosing a partner, being associated with others, physical attractiveness represents a consistent element for selection. From another perspective, as a psychological effect on parents' intervention in choosing a partner, some specialists developed a theory about the "Romeo and Juliet" effect and the hard-to-conquer effect. Thus, the specialists believe that parents' opposition in the formation and deepening of friendships or love relationships often has the opposite effect - strengthening that relationship and increasing the solidarity between partners to face challenges. By analogy with the old medieval story, the identified effect was called "Romeo and Juliet". The theory says that the intensity of love increases when parents or other opponents put obstacles in the way of the two parners. Justified by the excitability misattribution theory, authors say that as the parents' continuous interference creates that state of confusion and stress, mental excitability is misattributed to "love." Another theory that supports the Romeo and Juliet effect is the frustration and reaction theory, that explains the direct relationship between the forbidden thing and the individual's desire to obtain it (the mechanism of the "forbidden fruit").

On the same page, we have the "hard to conquer" phenomenon, a theory still in controversy because there are voices that support it, but also theorists who challenge it. If in the common consciousness there is the idea that men are attracted to women who are difficult to conquer, in reality things are more difficult to prove because there are men who do not react to such challenges, either because they become discouraged or because they do not take the risk of being refused. Other specialists believe that self-

estimation mechanisms enter into this game with the thought that "if I get what is hard to get, I will become more valuable". Specialists emphasize that this theory is not only applicable to men, but also to women (Iluţ, 2005, p. 113).

Another theory that can be applied to marital selection is the Theory of Roles and Mutual Love. The theory starts from the idea that people fall in love and form a relationship when they satisfy each other's needs for personal development and when the personal system of needs is understood and respected.

From an emotional perspective, the Love Spiral Theory says that the love between two partners follows cyclical phases, moving from the establishment of relationships between them, to intense and intimate communication, to that of mutual dependence, until the last stage, in which all personality needs are satisfied (Juravle et al., 2016), is reached. All these stages are reversible and the stronger the misunderstandings between the partners, the faster the reversibility (Vlad, 2019).

Easier to observe and quantify are, as the socio-cultural theories say, a series of socio-cultural factors that can lead in a greater proportion to the establishment and consolidation of a relationship. Such factors are: physical proximity, racial and religious endogamy and social and cultural homogamy (Voinea, 2005, pp. 94-95).

The filter theory specifies that choosing a partner involves a filtering process on five major dimensions: the proximity filter, the similarity filter, the personal attraction filter, the compatibility filter and the choice filter. The proximity filter is essential because the narrowing of prospecting possibilities greatly complicates the choice and decision to organize a life as a couple. The filter of personal attraction and compatibility represents the subjective level of this process and the choice involves the concertation of all factors that are the expression of one's own value system. (Mitrofan & Mitrofan, 1996).

2. Forced marriage - an influence of traditional imperatives

Forced marriage represents that marriage between two individuals that was achieved through the pressure of close people. In all cases, this situation was encountered in divorce files only in young couples who are more easily influenced to accept some classical values, considered to be moral. This situation is based on a consensual cohabitation relationship of at least one year. The young people lived as a family, maximizing the financial function of this institution and, at the same time, the sexual one, except for

reproduction which, as a rule, occurs accidentally. The climax in such a situation is the moment when the partner becomes pregnant. This is the time when the pressures on the families of origin to get married starts, because *"it is not good to have a child out of wedlock"*. Thus, their marriage is more forced than desired. Marriage itself imposes a series of moral obligations that limit the independence that the partners felt in the state of cohabitation, and the marriage is achieved more by the pressures of the extended family than by one's own convictions and becomes, in itself, a state that generates stress.

Although the legal imperatives specific to marriage are general and acceptable, however, rushing the moment of marriage surprises the partners in an uncomfortable situation (Barbu 2016; 2019; Barbu & Pană, 2021). The previous financial comfort changes; financial resources are invested with priority towards the child. Also, free time is reduced, as it is mostly allocated to the child, etc. In such a situation, a person who is not ready for marriage and takes the step under the influence of the family of origin, or under the pressure of the future in-laws, can easily deviate towards conflicting states and when he can no longer tolerate the pressure from the family, he ends up until leaving the marital home and divorce. The financial comfort before marriage decreases noticeably, and the psychological pressure generated by a marriage, for which at least one of the spouses was not prepared, gradually increases and can lead to dissolution.

Forced marriage is dominant in the case of families where one of the members comes from the rural environment, an environment where the influence of cultural imperatives is greater. For a better understanding of such a situation, we offer for example the case of the P family. *"We lived together for 4 years before marriage and I can say that it was a very beautiful period of our lives. We got married on February 22, 1990. In 1989, on September 30, our little girl A was born. The second child was born on October 21, 1990. From the beginning of the marriage, we felt certain tensions between us regarding how to live, but I hoped that they would be resolved with time. My wife required me to bring all the money home and spend it only on the household and the child, considering that only I worked. [...] We became separated almost 3 years after the birth of our second little girl. That's why I leave the children with my wife and contribute to their upbringing"*.

The new conditions of married life, under the pressure of those close to them, implies an adaptation to a set of conjugal roles that, previously, the spouses could have neglected. The degree of independence is reduced compared to previous situations, and the ability to quickly adapt to the new condition is diminished: *"We had a very beautiful friendship, being together for 6 and a half years. From the beginning, the marriage was tense, arguments were very frequent, starting from the defendant's disinterest in everything that family life means. In February*

2002, the defendant left the conjugal domicile permanently, although he knew that I was pregnant with our second child".

The appearance of the child takes the two partners out of the usual patterns of the consensual union, attracting new roles that, in general, cohabiting partners avoided. The repetition of the situation that forced the moment of their marriage (the wife's second pregnancy) constitutes the repetition of the moment that generated stress in their relationship (Gales et al., 2019). Thus, faced with the *fait accompli*, the husband chooses to leave the conjugal domicile, a situation that led to the dissolution of the respective family.

The new situations to which young people, pressured by their families of origin to get married, must adapt (restructuring of functions, conjugal roles, diminishing resources, influences external to the couple, a greater degree of involvement, responsibility, etc.), are elements that can strain a married couple encouraged to marry. In 26.3% of the studied cases, the forced marriage attested to the presence of violence. In most cases, the insistence of formalizing the marriage was supported by the in-laws' offer to live together until the couple could afford their own home. The tensions generated by the new values to which the partners had to adapt led to leaving the marital home, mainly by the one who lived in the in-laws' house.

Assessing statistically the problematic nature of this reason for dissolution, we observe a general weight of 6.9% of the total reasons for dissolution identified in the study. The gender approach to this reason shows us a greater tolerance for women in accepting the consequences of forced marriage. The problems of functionality, adaptation to the new roles required by married life and, of course, the quality of parenthood are elements that are much easier for women to assume compared to men. The forced marriage appears as a consequence of the cultural differences, of the canonical imperatives, still present in the Romanian society, which strongly demand marriage as a necessary environment for the birth and growth of a child.

3. The appearance of an unwanted child - the perception of sabotaging male independence

Although most families want children, there are some couples who delay having children or don't want them at all. When the partners' opinions are different, the potential for conflict increases considerably. For medical or theological reasons, a certain category of women does not approve of the idea of abortion, and an accidental pregnancy often marks the beginning of

marital conflict. Although in most cases, the women wanted their child and the men did not divorce immediately after its appearance, the marital problems that arose later due to the reduced degree of involvement of the man led to the dissolution.

The "unwanted child", according to the data of the study, is the one born without the will of the man, the one about whom there are doubts about paternity, the child from a previous marriage or even the child with medical problems. The appearance of the child also means rethinking the marital role structure, rethinking priorities and focusing attention on the child, which is harder to tolerate for a husband with a high degree of individuality. On the other hand, accusations of infidelity addressed to women, as well as those of denying the child, are even harder to bear. In most of the cases that presented this type of conflict, the woman medically certified paternity, but the husbands' doubts did not disappear: *"If the child is mine, as long as you stay in my house, you educate her as I want. I don't need the ideas of your mother, your godparents or your brother. That's all I say and nothing more."*

On the other hand, the accusation that one of the partners does not want the child was also understood as a strategy to obtain custody or certain material advantages, using the children as "exchange currency". For the purposes of this study, the weight of this reason represents 3.06% of the total cases, and 72.5% of men do not assume the child. There is, therefore, a small category of fathers who accept children if the decision of pregnancy and birth does not belong to them.

The families in which such problems were identified have a lower degree of homogamy, the spouses being originally from different cultural backgrounds. Women adapt more easily to parenthood and take on responsibilities much faster. The men are the ones who put pressure on the women, bring harsh criticism to them and separate themselves from them financially: *"I married the defendant and a child resulted from this marriage. From the beginning of our marriage we had problems. After the birth of the child, the situation got worse, we parted with the money..."*.

Considering the entire sample, men complain four times more about this problem, most of them being remarried (almost half of them have children from previous relationships). The weight of male accusations is 7.69%, while women complain in only 2.06% of the situations. Men mention this problem in 67.04% as the first reason for the dissolution of the marriage and in 32.96% of cases as the second reason, while 50% of women mention this as the first reason and 50% as the second reason.

The problem of accepting children depends on many factors. Classical cultural environments are more reluctant to remarry, and raising

other people's children seems hard to tolerate. On the other hand, a couple with a greater degree of freedom can see in the appearance of the child a limitation of this freedom. From another point of view, the reduction of resources following the appearance of the child becomes a discomfort again and, by extension, a reason for marital tensions that can lead to divorce.

4. Conclusions

The moment of the marriage decision takes place against the background of a double confirmation, of a double hope (confirmed or pending) of joint fulfillment. Each partner loads in these contexts their own ideals, values, projections of happiness, etc. We can talk about a natural rhythm of the merge, both from a romantic and a legal point of view. Partners take the step towards marriage when they feel ready for it. Beyond the natural rhythm, traditional influences come to weigh down different decisions and moments. Accepting marriage when the couple does not feel ready for this moment implies at the same time a latent assumption of some fears and frustrations that will not be slow to activate when stressful conditions arise within the couple. If in an ordinary situation, the inherent challenges of married life stimulate the partners to solidarity behaviors, in the case of stimulated or culturally imposed marriages, such contexts activate fears and reactivate frustrations and old dilemmas regarding the security of marriage.

Theoretically, contemporaneity is described by concepts that present society as being modern, tolerant and open to diversity, but, in an objective approach, Romanian society still bears influences of the old functional values that define the marital relationship. The image of individuals is still influenced by their marital background (single, cohabiting, married, divorced, remarried, etc.), families still have resources to influence young people, and marital roles and gender attitudes are still inequitable in many situations. Against this background, the fear of assuming the image of an unmarried mother can still stimulate the haste of the marriage decision.

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