

ARTICLES

The Year the World Stopped: Quarantine and How It Affects Marriages

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Marriage is viewed as a union formed before a higher power. When frictions arise, why do marriages get hit the most? COVID-19 caused a disruption among marriages. Coronavirus hit the United States, not only physically, but financially, and emotionally as well. Between financial insecurity, job loss, and lack of a social life, married couples began to pull away from their reality. Previous research has used qualitative studies to account for the rate of divorces among those who face trying times. In this context, this study will present qualitative research from secondary data and provide understanding of the recent shift in societal standards in marriage during the pandemic. It discusses the different dynamics in which decreased marital rates and increased divorce rates within the United States, as in modern times, more women are suggesting being single than to be in a marriage. The downfall of marriages can be compared to other factors, such as domestic violence. The current state of marriages did not get here rapidly, but over time.

Introduction

On January 21, 2020, the first recorded case of the Coronavirus had the world at a standstill. In March, the U.S. government thought it was best to close public places such as schools, restaurants, and parks. There were even restrictions on who could come into hospitals. Fear and isolation rose in the country. Citizens feared they would not get to socialize, see family, and enjoy their favorite restaurant foods again. As a result, people began to lose their jobs, as small business owners found it hard to successfully run a business virtually. In particular, married couples struggled to communicate and live cohesively for a prolonged period because of the lack of communication, social life, and independence during the COVID-19 pandemic. What causes couples to withdraw from their marriages when hit with a life-altering event? Some would think couples become closer and become a haven for one another. Consequently, married couples were faced with personal and marital hardships, such as deciding on brick and mortar schools for their children, protection against COVID-19 that caused higher divorce rates.

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The Pandemic and Marriage

Considering the COVID-19 vaccine, some were hesitant to get it, but some jumped to the possibility of having a better chance of surviving through natural immunity. There are theorists that believed vaccines caused the death of many people; however, others did understand this is the only way to get people into a normal society again. According to “7 reasons people don’t get vaccinated against COVID-19,” the study discussed individuals that considered the coronavirus vaccine ill-prepared (Leggett, 2022). The full protection from catching COVID-19 was not guaranteed unlike the vaccine for measles. Most individuals have been taking vaccines since birth, and most can attest they have never gotten the disease associated with the vaccine. According to the Cleveland Clinic, currently in the United States, the number of deaths has dropped from about 100 deaths per year to 20 deaths per year after the vaccine for chickenpox was available. Vaccines created for diseases do not create a full-proof plan of immunity but they do decrease deaths and the people that can be affected by the diseases.

However, people were seeing that even if you got the vaccines for the coronavirus, you could still die from it. Skepticism that the vaccine would do more harm than good was arising in the country. According to CNBC, “Covid vaccines are proven to reduce severe illness, hospitalization and death from the virus,” which reiterates that vaccines could provide immediate help and decrease deaths (Ellyatt, 2022). The CNBC article also brings light to the effect on marriages with the denial of Coronavirus despite evidence demonstrating the destructiveness of the virus. According to “Arguing with your partner over Covid? You are not alone, with the pandemic straining many relationships,” there was a separation in the nation, as some believed in the government and others believed it was a hoax. A family law lawyer, Sara Barnes, shares insight that the denial caused a married woman to seek a divorce. The denial is a strain on the marriage, which can be irrevocable.

For couples to be in a closed home area for a substantial amount of time, it can cause people to be annoyed and anxious. The vaccine was created to bring families and friends back together, but for individuals that do not see the importance of getting the vaccine, then it slows the process. For example, when the CDC had the stipulation that no more than ten people could gather, most individuals wanted the invited persons to be vaccinated. Moreover, in marriage, it is biblically said that in a marriage the people become one. But a close, tense home environment can increase the chances of domestic violence. According to “COVID gave him an opportunity to tighten the reins around my throat”: perceptions of COVID-19 movement restrictions among survivors of intimate partner violence,” abuse from partners increased with the ordered quarantine (Wyckoff et al., 2023). Isolation and decrease of social interaction can allow easy access to the victim. With married couples facing disagreements and lack of interaction with family and friends, violence can be more frequent.

Additionally, the choice of vaccinations is not a new battle families have been struggling with. With lockdowns in effect and people slowly losing connections with friends and family, along with the number of deaths increasing, can result in a decrease of mental health. According to “Low assets and financial stressors associated with higher depression during COVID-19 in a nationally representative sample of US adults,” out of 712 individuals that were married, 18.3% suffered from depression during the coronavirus quarantine (Ettman et al., 2021). Mental health is a daily factor that affects how a person interacts with others. In society, symbolic interaction is prevalent in our daily life. From birth to death, we interpret body language, tone of voices, touch and even music with interaction. Within quarantine, there was little to no interaction. As humans, we require much of our daily interactions to survive. Married couples need more than each other to survive. Some did not have children to look after. Also, after being around someone for too long, you become irritated because it can feel like a confined space. Interaction with friends and other family members was necessary for couples to maintain sanity in their marriage. People wanted to get out of their houses into a “normal” society. For society to integrate, citizens had to at least get one vaccination. But when limitations were placed, fear arose and people rebelled.

Subsequently, the lockdown of the nation caused some to lose their jobs. In modern society, both men and women are providers for the household. If one or both lost their job, the couple would be financially unstable or even more codependent. When the financial burden falls on one person, it can make one feel worthless. Arguments can arise when a couple faces challenges, and some cannot make it through. According to “Pandemic Shortfall in Marriages and Divorces in the United States,” a study was conducted that illustrated “there is preliminary evidence these declines have persisted and possibly been exacerbated by the pandemic” which demonstrated the effect of the pandemic and the stresses surrounding it, can affect married couples and couples that want to be married (Westrick-Payne et al., 2022). As couples navigated the pandemic, there were instances where a person grew into something that others are not used to. As a result, marriages can suffer, or they can grow themselves.

Furthermore, due to lockdown, some couples could not get through the necessary process for marriage. According to a study, “Decline in Marriage Associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States,” Wagner illustrated that because some governmental buildings were closed, some couples could not get a marriage certificate. Also, couples canceled their weddings because of COVID-19 or low attendance stipulations that the government had placed for health reasons (Wagner et al., 2020). The lockdown contributed to marriages not happening because there was a stable process throughout the beginning of the pandemic. Without help, people looking to get married did not follow mandates with the uncertainty of when society would resume normal daily activities.

Conclusion

Hesitation, fear, anxiety, and hope were guiding the country through this new virus called COVID-19. No one person or thing could provide humans with a pamphlet to navigate this. The impact of the pandemic and coronavirus was more than just sickness. People began living in survival mode, and some were effected more than others. Marriages can be seen declining as people see personalities that were not there before. With financial, personal, and marital problems, some couples gave up and others did not get to the aisle.

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