The Impact of Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors on Age at First Marriage among Married Women in Villages of Zabol, Iran (2014)

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Abstract

In this survey, in order to find the effective factors upon the age at first marriage as to women aged 15-49 from the villages of Zabol, data have been gathered through questionnaires, and the following variables have been considered: age at first marriage as dependent variable, and income of women's fathers, education of women's fathers, occupation of women's fathers, income of women's husbands, education of women's husbands, occupation of women's husbands, education of women, employment status of women, household size, ethnicity of women, religion of women, the women's attitude toward ideal marriage age for girls, the women's attitude toward ideal marriage age for boys, the birth order in family, women's number of sisters, women's number of brothers, the type of family, and the source of decision-making about marriage as independent variables. Theories such as Exchange Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Wealth Flow Theory, Game Theory, Theory of Demographic Change and Response and Search Theory, a model has been chosen based on people's preference for achieving educational positions, better occupations, and more facilities that contribute to the increase of the marriage age. The gathered data have been analyzed through SPSS package, and statistical methods such as T-test, ANOVA, and Multiple Regression have been used for analysis. From among 18 independent variables in this research, 16 have been accepted and approved but the occupation of women's fathers and income of women's fathers have been rejected. Eventually, determination of the main variables of this survey through Multiple Regression leads to $R^2 = 0.75$; it means these variables can predict the dependent variable for 75 percent. Consequently, the proposed model is relatively a proper one. Based on the results, the research model was approved. The research model was planned according to communities, which have experienced Modernization; therefore, it was not expected that this model would respond in the remote villages of Zabol. However, the obtained results proved that despite the exposure of this community to factors such as ethnicity and religion, Modernization has also left its influence upon this area, and we can consider the same model by adding or reducing two or three variables in such a community.

Keywords: socio, economic, demographic, age at first marriage, women.
Introduction

By definition, a social institution is a set of ready-made solutions to problems people encounter in some aspects of their lives in the course of ordinary life experiences. Social Institutions are relatively stable systems of related beliefs, values, and norms, together with the groups and networks that help to put these into action. Historically, sociologists have considered five major social institutions: the economy, government, religion, education, and family. It was generally held that these are not separate systems, but rather sub-systems of one of the others. The family institution starts with marriage. Marriage may be defined as a relation of one or more men to one or more women that is recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and that of the children born of it. These rights and duties vary among different peoples, and cannot, therefore, be all included in a general definition; yet there must, of course, be something, which they have in common. Marriage is something more than a regulated sexual relation is. It is an economic institution, which may in various ways affect the proprietary rights of the parties. Based on The Civil Laws, Article 1041 of marriage law, marriage in Iran is disallowed before maturity age, and in Article 1210 of Civil Laws, Note 1, the maturity age for boys is 15 complete lunar years and 9 for girls.

Problem

Family is the first social organization and the basic unit of society. The total of these units establishes the society. Marriage is the substructure of family and family is formed by marriage. If the factors effective on marriage are not regarded, the basis of family will be weakened leading into a probable marriage break-off. One of the most important problems to be considered is the age at first marriage. Today young people are marrying at older ages than their parents did, and substantially smaller percentages of women marry before the age 20 than previous generations; thus median age at marriage is rising in nearly all regions. Formal education in developing countries can be a factor in delayed marriage. In Iran, the rate of unemployment is very high, and education and housing are very difficult and expensive to gain. Young people, especially young men, must attain economic independence before their first marriage increase, which will take a long time. After the Islamic Revolution, due to the economic recession caused by the Iran-Iraq War, the role of women suffered a notable decline, especially in the industrial sector. Socio-economic development and an increase in literacy and educational attainment have played an important role in the postponement of marriage, especially among females. The social systems in Iran are changing; so then are economic, family, population, education and even religious structures. In demography when a country moves toward development, the age of first marriage will tend to rise higher. Based on available statistics, the average age of marriage for girls in 1966, 1986 and 1996 were respectively 18, 20 and 22 years. Furthermore, the above numbers have had an increasing trend during the ensuing years after 1996. This rising trend may raise several questions to be asked.

Is the age at first marriage for married women in villages of Zabol continually rising?
Why? What effects does the ever-increasing growth in the average age of women have on family issues and the society as a whole? Which socio-economic and demographic factors affect the rising age at marriage? Does the pattern of age at first marriage in Zabol share common characteristics with the general marriage transition in Iran? Do modernization forces such as increasing educational attainment, growing urbanization and expansion of working opportunities outside agriculture have significant influences on the postponement of marriage in Zabol?

Purpose
In Iran, the family is the most important. Family ties are the strongest relationship one can have in Iran. In fact, family ties influence many of political, social, and economic decisions. Families, schools and labor markets are all changing, generally in ways that broaden opportunities for young people and may ultimately alter relationships between the sexes. An important element of these changes is the pattern of delayed marriage, coupled with higher rates of permanent celibacy that have emerged throughout much of the region. A review of the recent literature provides evidence that, despite the changing patterns towards later marriage, Asian countries display considerable variations in marriage patterns. Why is the average age of marriage for Iranian girls continually rising? Why the ratio of growth for unmarried girls is much higher compared to that of single men? What effects does the ever-increasing growth in the average age of women have on family issues and the society as a whole? While studies on fertility, mortality and contraception have been numerous, the topic of marriage and related issues has not yet been the subject of systematic research in Iran. This situation has resulted primarily from a lack of data on this matter and a failure to understand the importance of marriage in regulating the reproductive behavior of women vis-à-vis the contribution of that institution to small family size. Procreation occurs almost totally within marriage in Iran. Upward or downward trend in marriage in Iran is likely to influence the reproductive behavior of women. Thus, for a country like Iran, it would be impossible to achieve a replacement level of fertility by increasing the level of control of marital fertility alone; age at marriage and/or the proportion who ever marry would have to rise as well. These issues tend to attach importance to the necessity of studying marriage patterns and their changes in Iran. The analysis will be confined to first marriages only because they have more relevance for public policy owing to their precise impact on fertility compared with subsequent marriages.

Literature
The characteristics and functions of family as a social institution have been changing during the last centuries. Almost all the perspectives and studies are unanimous on an external factor influencing family changes. According to these perspectives, family has changed from an extended to a nuclear one. The workplace has been separated from life place and parts of family’s functions have been transferred to other institutions and organizations. Change of gender roles and movement of women to the labor market are other consequences of
family changes. Moving along with the industrialization process, both western and Iranian families have had slow and continuous changes. The extended and patriarchal families have been replaced by nuclear family. Authority of father has weakened and a new local family has replaced the patrilocal family. Family has altered from a productive to a consumer agent. Youths are freed from father’s domination and have achieved independence.

**Hypotheses**

It seems that the following relationships can be found between dependent variables and independent variables:

1. There is a positive relationship between income of woman’s father and the age at first marriage of woman.
2. There is a positive relationship between income of husband and the age at first marriage of woman.
3. There is a positive relationship between woman’s education and the age at first marriage.
4. There is a significant relationship between education of woman’s father and the age at first marriage of woman.
5. There is a significant relationship between education of husband and the age at first marriage of woman.
6. There is a negative relationship between household size and woman’s age at first marriage.
7. The age at first marriage for women who had been in nuclear family, is higher than extended family.
8. The age at first marriage for Shiite women is higher than Sunni women.
9. The age at first marriage for Fars women is higher than Baluch women.
10. There is a significant relationship between occupation of woman and the age at first marriage.
11. There is a significant relationship between occupation of woman’s father and the age at first marriage.

**Reliability of the Questionnaire**

Reliability of questionnaire has been examined using the pretest and item analysis method. Thirty primary questionnaires were filled out by respondents through a pre-interview. Then unintelligible questions and those questions that rejected in item analysis have been removed.

**Validity of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire includes selective questions from previous surveys carried out in similar topics. The opinion of some researchers about questions was also taken to ensure the validity of the questionnaire.

**Analytical Method**

Setting up and testing hypotheses is an essential part of statistical inference. A test statistic is
a quantity calculated from our sample of data. The choice of a test statistic will depend on the assumed probability model and the hypotheses under question. I will analyze data research by SPSS package. I used of descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses.

Definition of Variables

Dependent Variable

Age at first marriage of woman:
It refers to the age of woman in her first marriage.

Independent Variables

Income of father: It is defined as the total of money that father obtains in a month through a job and according to Rials.

Income of husband: It is defined as the total of money that husband obtains in a month through a job and according to Rials.

Education of women: It is a measure that determines the educational level of women and literacy and is categorized on the basis of the latest literacy condition of persons as primary, secondary, and high schools and the university.

Education of father: It is a measure that determines the educational level of men (father) and literacy and is categorized, on the basis of the latest literacy condition of the women as primary, secondary, and high schools and the university.

Education of husband: It is a measure that determines the educational level of men (husband) and literacy and is categorized, on the basis of the latest literacy condition of the women as primary, secondary, and high schools and the university.

Household size: It refers to the number of persons living together in one residence; sharing living expenses and eating together constitutes a household.

Status of Employment: It refers to women with at least one employee (wage or salary earner) to help them carry out their activities and is considered as employment.

Occupation: It refers to 12 types of employment:
1. Housewife
2. Driver
3. Teacher
4. Officer
5. Simple worker
6. Farmer and animal husbandry
7. Small seller and vendor
8. The clergy
9. Retired
10. Disabled
11. Unemployed (seeking work)
12. Others

Type of family: It refers to two types of family:
1. Extended family: Family system in which several generations live in one household. Extended family is deeply embedded in a broad set of kinship relation.
2. Nuclear family: The parental couple and their immediate offspring.

Religion: It refers to Shiite and Sunni women.

Ethnicity: It refers to Fars, Baluch women.

Decision-Making: It refers to the resources (father, mother, respondent) for last decision
about the respondent’s marriage.

**Number of sisters:** It refers to number of sisters that the respondent has.

**Number of brothers:** It refers to number of brothers that the respondent has.

**Results and Findings**

In this chapter, the data obtained from interview and questionnaires through a cross-sectional survey have been analyzed and presented in tables and charts by three procedures:

1) Description of some demographic and socio-economic variables
2) Bivariate analysis
3) Multivariate analysis

The statistics shows that fathers, as decision-makers on marriage hold the highest percentage (37.69%) for age at first marriage between 15 to 19, and the lowest for 30 to 35. It means that fathers’ decisions are the cause of decrease in the age at first marriage? The value of Chi-Square Tests is 249.81 and it is significant (sig=0.000). Therefore, there is a meaningful relationship between two variables.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Since family is one of the most important social institutions and is basically formed through marriage, the change in marriage process affects the basis of family. It also influences other social institutions. One of these changes is the obvious change in the age at first marriage. One of the consequences of Modernism in a society is usually the increase of the age of marriage. Hence, factors, which contribute to the growth of Modernism in a society, affect the increase of the marriage age, too. The age at first marriage as a factor lays impacts on fertility and the structure of population. Therefore, change of this process can be changing other factors and some socio-economic and demographic factors can affect age at first marriage. In this survey, I have chosen the married women aged 15-49 from the villages of Zabol town to see whether or not the process of change in the age at first marriage in the remote villages (in which all socio-economic criteria are low) follows the process of changes in Tehran and Shiraz. Consequently, it is assumed that even these remote villages.

Theories such as Exchange Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Wealth Flow Theory, Body Sociology Theory, Game Theory, Search Theory, Theory of Demographic Change and Response, Role Theory, Alliance Theory, and others are included in theoretical framework section. Through using these theories especially Exchange Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Wealth Flow Theory, Game Theory, Theory of Demographic Change and Response and Search Theory, a model has been chosen based on people’s preference for achieving educational positions, better occupations, and more facilities that contribute to the increase of the marriage age. In this work, the research method has been indirect and cross-sectional survey and data gathering have been done through questionnaires. The dependent variable is the age at first marriage as to the married women aged 15-49 from villages of Zabol, and the independent variables include: income of women’s fathers, education of women’s fathers, occupation of women’s fathers, income of women’s husbands, education of women’s husbands, occupation of women’s husbands, education of women, employment status of women, household size, ethnicity of women, religion of women, the women’s attitude toward ideal marriage age for girl, the women’s attitude toward ideal marriage age for boy,
the birth order in family, number of sisters, number of brothers, the type of family, the source of decision-making about marriage. The gathered data have been analyzed through SPSS package, and statistical methods such as T-test, ANOVA, and Regression have been used for analysis. From among 18 independent variables in this research, 16 have been accepted and approved but the occupation of women’s fathers and income of women’s fathers have been rejected.

Eventually, determination of the main variables of this survey through Multiple Regression leads to $R^2 = 0.75$; it means that these variables can predict the dependent variable for 75 percent. Consequently, the proposed model is relatively a proper one.

**Limitation**

-To obtain the background of inside (internal) researches for this survey, Internet sources lacked sufficient and precise information.

- All the domestic researches regarding the history of family and marriage were in Farsi and their translation to English was a lengthy and time-consuming procedure.

-Considering the fact that Sistani and Baluchistan involves Baloch and Fars ethnics and Shiite and Sunni sects, data gathering proved very difficult because the inhabitants trusted only the local people and responded truly to them. For this reason, we were forced to choose interviewers (surveyors) from among native people.

- There was not a hard and fast theory on the marriage age and to obtain the main model many theories were needed to use. Previous researches had been done in cities such as Tehran and Shiraz in which Modernism can be traced quite obviously, and I had no research model for this statistical community as Zabol.

**Suggestion**

It is suggested that future researches who are willing to work in such a statistical community not consider variables such as the occupation of women’s fathers and the income of women’s fathers because the amount of income in this area is very low and income is not a good index for evaluation of economic factors and other economic indices should be taken into consideration. As income is influenced by occupation, these variables do not respond properly. Therefore, it would be much better to disregard them in later researches. In such a community, variables like ethnicity, religion and other variables that refer to native and local position should be taken into account, because the people in this area are still influenced by some traditional norms and values. In the research model, religion is an influential factor. Hence, it is suggested that, regarding change of institutions and organizations, people pay attention more to the factor of religion than to programming. One of the most effective factors upon the dependent variable in the research model is the level of father’s education. Regarding the fact that in other conclusions in this survey the main decision-maker is the father of family and that many of families in this area are of the extended type, raising the level of father’s education in This area is of importance. We have entered the source of decision-Making in the equation after recoding it, and the result shows that own self is accepted. It means that if the woman herself decides for her marriage, the age of first marriage will be high. The age of first Marriage is high if the level of father’s education grows high.
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