Adolescent Fertility and Early Parenthood in Iran

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Extended Abstract

Because of serious and wide- ranging adverse consequences, adolescent fertility and early parenthood has emerged as an issue of great concern during recent decades. Literature suggest that adolescent fertility are usually associated with lower educational attainment, marital instability, closer spacing of subsequent children, larger completed family size, and poorer mental and physical health of the mother and child. Because of these broad consequences, any efforts to improve reproductive health of adolescent through preventing early childbearing need accurate information regarding their social and economic attributes. However, there are surprisingly little studies on adolescent fertility behaviours in Iran. The aim of the present study is to examine patterns and differentials associated with transition to early parenthood in Iran. Specifically, this paper addresses following questions: How common is early childbearing among adolescent in Iran? What are the characteristics of adolescent mothers and their husbands in Iran? To what extent adolescent mothers and their husbands' differences in such socio-demographic characteristics as marital status, place of residence, educational attainment, employment and migration status are associated with their childbearing patterns in Iran? Individual data from the 2% sample of 2006 Iranian national census have been used for the study.

The findings indicate that in 2011 adolescent fertility rate in Iran is near the average observed both in the world and in MENA region. According to the findings, 21.53% of female adolescents were married and 5.29% of female adolescents had child/children.

Adolescent motherhood is associated with lower educational attainment and education continuation. From one point of view, never-married adolescent have higher level of educational attainment than their married counterparts. From another point of view, the proportion of never-married adolescent who are students is 32 percent. This figure reduced to

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12 percent for married adolescent but without childbirth, and to 2.11 percent for married adolescent with childbirth. This finding implies that pregnancy undermines a girl's ability to continue her education. This pattern can result in reduced skilled human capital and has negative implications for socio-economic development particularly given that Iran recently entered the period of demographic window.
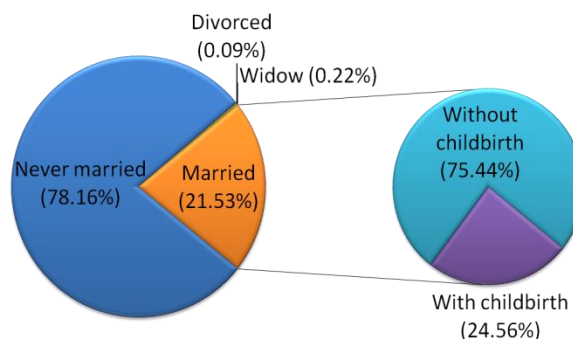
Examining employment status of adolescent show that, while there is a low level of labour force participation for female adolescent (1.08-1.55%), their husband employment is 78.8 for married with children and 79.5 percent for married without children.

The study also shows that adolescent marriage is associated with high age difference between spouses (around eight years). Given lower education of adolescent married women and their low labour force participation, it can result in male dominance in decision makings and increased reliance of wives on their husbands.

The paper concludes with a discussion outlining the scope for further research. It suggests deeper research that needed for determining the path to adolescent childbearing and its consequences for self, families and national socio-economic development. There is also need for collecting detailed (longitudinal) data on adolescent fertility in Iran.

Following tables and figures show some preliminary results:

Adolescent fertility and marital status, Iran (2011)

Age difference between adolescent wives and husbands, Iran (2011)

		Mean	Standard deviation	Median
With childbirth	Adolescent wives	18.13	1.026	18
	Husbands	26.16	4.40	26
	Difference	**8.03**	-	8
Without childbirth	Adolescent wives	17.72	1.23	18
	Husbands	25.23	4.81	25
	Difference	**7.51**	-	8

Adolescent fertility and province of residence, Iran (2011)

Adolescent fertility and level of education, Iran (2011)

Adolescent fertility and husband's employment, Iran (2011)

Married with childbirth

- 21.17
- 78.83

■ Working
■ Not working

Married without childbirth

- 20.47
- 79.53

■ Working
■ Not working
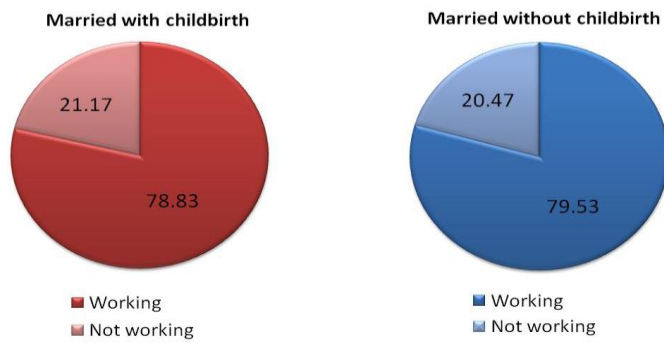
Adolescent fertility and migration, Iran (2011)

Married with childbirth

- 14.84
- 85.16

■ Migrant
■ Not migrant

Married without childbirth

- 14.91
- 85.09

■ Migrant
■ Not migrant

Never married

- 4.63
- 95.37

■ Migrant
■ Not migrant