

Intergenerational Variation and Changes in Attitudes towards Marriage Issues in Iran

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Abstract

During recent decades, dramatic shifts in attitudes and values regarding some aspects of marriage have occurred in Iran. Researches show that these ideational changes have important consequences for subsequent family-related behaviors. Because of these dramatic change and their important behavioral consequences, attitudes towards marriage and family are an especially important topic for the study.

This paper specifically examines intergenerational variation and changes between parents and their unmarried children in attitudes towards marriage in Iran. The paper explores a wide range of marriage issues, including attitudes towards ideal age at marriage, consanguineous marriage, spousal choice, living arrangements (of both parents and newly married couples) after marriage, practice of polygyny and remaining single. The investigation also looks at the influences of the educational level and other demographic factors on Iranian attitudes toward these marriage issues.

Data used in the study come from a recently conducted survey in the city of Yazd, a city in the central part of Iran. The survey questionnaire encompassed a wide variety of prospective and retrospective questions on such demographic and family issues as marriage, mate selection process, fertility behavior, contraceptive use as well as attitudes and values concerning family life. Using this data file and for the purpose of present study, we created two linked sample, one of mother and the other of their never married daughters, which enable us to observe marriage attitudes from the perspective of both generation.

Results of the study show that people's attitudes and values toward specific dimensions of marriage have changed dramatically from the previously accepted societal standards of behavior in Iranian culture. For example, there is increased acceptance of higher age at marriage for both sexes, more involvement of young people in their mate selection process, independent living after marriage and at the same time, declining acceptance of marriage between relatives as well as polygamous marriage. Results also show that generational difference in these marriage attitudes is significant, with young people for the most part favoring those attitudes that are more modern.