Marriage Holdup among Highly-Educated Iranian Girls

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Abstract

During past two decades, Iran has got great gains in terms of educational attainment of all its members, which in turn, altered basic social and cultural believes and tenets, such as those believes relating to marital behavior. Literacy rate for total population is almost 80 percent, and for some five years girls counting for 60 percent of registered people in complementary studies (Universities). Under the influences of many socio-economic factors- as claimed, mostly because of economic hardships- Iranian boys and girls now delay marriage till the second half of their thirties, however, marriage is almost universal (99 percent of *marriable* people get marry by the age of 45-49). What remain attentive are considerable proportions of highly educated girls (especially in rural areas) who never find the chance of marriage till the end of their usual fertile life. The story is completely different for highly educated boys, however, who marry not too much different comparing to those boys with lower educational attainment.

Using information of more than 950,000 10-54 individuals (drawn from a 2-percent sample of census 2006, which circulated by the *S*tatistical *C*enter of *I*ran), the effects of rising levels of Iranian girls' educational attainment on their marital outcomes are studied and discussed. Preliminary findings show that proportions of girls with university level educations, who are never-married by the ages of 40-44 and 45-49, are around 10.35 and 7.6 percent, respectively, which clearly compare to those of girls with lower educational attainment (1.5 percent never-married) and to those of boys of the same age and the same educational attainment (with around 2 percent never-married).

Though traditionally, educated girls were more likely to be chosen as Brides (both frequently and sooner), it seems they are loosing this advantage in Iranian marriage market! Findings hypothesize that highly educated girls are more likely to remain unmarried comparing to both boys and girls of lower education. Partial explanations for this observation are:

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Highly educated girls, spending many years in educating themselves, both get older and get hold of higher expectations from their possible marriage and usually accept the proposals from the boys having at least the same educational attainment that they themselves have. At the same time, most of Iranian boys, especially at higher levels of education, tend to marry to girls with lower education and younger comparing to their own educational attainment and age. The result of this situation (which needs more investigations to be confirmed) is that, on the one hand, highly educated girls do not easily say *yes* to possible proposals from boys with lower educational groups, and on the other hand, boys generally are less eager to marry to girls with higher ages and higher educational attainment comparing to themselves'.

The Spread of higher education, especially among girls in recent years and its marital outcomes needed to be taken into account and timely addressed by the related polices and cultural works.

Table 1- Proportion Never-Married by Age Group, Gender and Educational Attainment

		10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Male	Illiterate	98.63	91.52	62.09	27.77	10.85	6.30	3.17
	Elementary	99.66	94.97	57.54	20.29	6.14	2.19	1.01
	Secondary	99.73	97.03	67.82	26.91	9.76	4.17	1.96
	High School	99.65	99.14	79.21	36.00	13.17	6.08	3.13
	University	100.00	99.14	90.93	51.21	14.68	4.85	2.63
Female	Illiterate	94.84	62.55	34.40	17.64	9.70	5.24	2.97
	Elementary	98.94	67.46	35.44	19.87	11.21	6.01	2.94
	Secondary	99.05	64.64	29.46	15.18	8.92	5.52	2.88
	High School	99.19	88.08	44.51	21.38	12.74	6.91	4.58
	University	-	92.60	73.70	40.00	20.87	11.74	10.35