

## **SOME SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MARITAL UNIONS AND DETERMINANTS OF CHILDBEARING INTENTIONS**

Demographic studies, on nuptiality refer to marriage as a population phenomenon and they usually focus upon demographic aspects of marriages; such as age at marriage, proportions married, divorce rate. After being neglected for a long time, affects of cultural variables on demographic components have gained popularity in the general demography literature in the last decades. The linkages between social and cultural aspects of marital unions and subsequent demographic outcomes, on the other hand, are generally considered as a subject matter in population studies realm.

Turkey has experienced various intensive social and economic changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ongoing changes in the social life are increasingly restructuring the public and it seems that these changes are likely to carry on into the future with integration attempts to European Union. Population dynamics, showing high regional disparity (not in direction but mainly in level), are not constant but they are in a gradual movement. Turkey is a country with a multi – cultural social structure. In the country different demographic regimes are prevalent simultaneously. Thus, the demography studies which take into account social and cultural differentiations in the society gains more importance.

Turkey has a long tradition of conducting nationwide demographic surveys since 1968. So far, 8 nationwide sample surveys conducted at regular five – year intervals by the Hacettepe University, Institute of Population Studies. The most of the survey data in these studies were compiled in the form defined by the WFS – DHS heritage. The last national level survey conducted in 2003 that makes it possible to perform analyses for Turkey as a whole, for urban and rural areas and for five demographic regions of the country.

All the surveys included separate sections in the questionnaires to obtain information on ‘marriage attributes’ and ‘reproductive norms and expectations’ of Turkish women at the survey date. Thus, to begin with, present accumulated data and the previous literature about marriages and fertility preferences enable to perceive what has changed to what extent in this field so far.

The following attributes of marital unions, which reflect traditional or modern attributes, are considered particularly important;

1. The legal standing of the marital unions; religious and/or civil?
2. Consanguinity between spouses
3. Payment of “bride’s money”
4. Decision making in the formation of marital unions
5. Living arrangement at the beginning of marital life and current situation

An overall sight implies that with spread of urbanization, transformation of agricultural economy, increasing participation and education of women in the society, customary initiation of marriages have lost their significance in the last three decades. Socio – economic developments that can be seen as ‘modernization’ brought about change in the cultural traits of marriages. ‘Consanguinity between spouses’, on the other hand, is observed as the most resistant characteristic compare to others; in the one out of five union there is some degree of kin relationship between couples and that prevalence almost remained the same in the last three decades.

Reproductive preferences have been subjected to widespread demographic scrutiny along with a debate about the reliability of fertility preferences data. Various studies have emphasized effects of socioeconomic and demographic factors on fertility preferences of women in developing countries. In the TDHS – 2003 currently married women were asked to state their preferences on whether they want to have a(nother) child in the future, and if they desired so, the timing of the next birth<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Questions about fertility preferences are asked women in the half of the households in the sample of the survey.

Preliminary findings presents that nearly 70 percent of currently married women expressed that they do not want to have more births in the future.

The present picture on these issues is elaborated extensively with the data from Ever Married Women questionnaire of the TDHS – 2003. The survey based on a nationally representative probability sample of 10,836 households and 8,075 ever married women under 50 years of age. In order to simplify analyses only characteristics of the ‘first’ marriages are analyzed that comprise 96 percent of the all women sampled. The quantitative changes in the pattern and practice of marriages are also discussed in relation to sociological and anthropological literature on the issue.

The study will employ a number of statistical methods in examining key questions relation to childbearing intention in relation to social and cultural variables which can be polarized roughly as traditional and modern. The explanatory variables will be grouped into four categories; individual, cultural, fertility and contextual in order to elaborate future childbearing intention of currently married women aged 30 – 49<sup>2</sup>. The individual variables include characteristics of the women that have been shown to impact on behavioral measures; including respectively; ‘age’, ‘educational level’, ‘other education’<sup>3</sup>, ‘economic activity’ and, ‘work status’. The cultural variables represent factors that capture differences among respondents in the socially transmitted complex of knowledge, belief, morals and custom. They include, in this sense, that ‘ethnicity’, ‘traditionality score’<sup>4</sup> and ‘approval of family planning use’. The fertility variables will include ‘marriage cohort’, ‘number of living children’ and ‘sex of living children’<sup>5</sup>. Lastly, the contextual variables include ‘region’, ‘current type of residence’; ‘household welfare’<sup>6</sup> and ‘family type’<sup>7</sup>.

The basic question “who wants to have more child?” is answered by a descriptive analysis and differentials in terms of the individual, cultural, fertility and contextual variables will be presented. Multivariate analysis, logistic regression models, will be used to explore the second question “what are the determinants of desiring an additional child?”<sup>8</sup>. The analysis will examine the odds of additional childbearing desire and its determinants. The model fitting process will be stepwise and involve four subsequent stages; respectively, individual, cultural, fertility and contextual variables, in order to asses the additive effects of the micro and macro level variables simultaneously.

It is expected to explore role of social and cultural attributes, with emphasizing the marriage characteristics, in the future childbearing intentions of Turkish women with this study. In addition, results of the study may help to understand ongoing process, cultural change towards traditional to modern and its effect on fertility preferences, in other developing countries in demographic transition.

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<sup>2</sup> When age pattern of fertility considered in Turkey, the tendency to have children early in the childbearing period is evident; the highest age specific fertility rates are observed in the 20 – 24 and 25 – 29 age groups. Likewise, childbearing intention of women is also high in these ages since they desire to reach their ideal family size. Deliberate fertility limitation is more likely after age 30. In order to possible confounding effect of age variable, the women below age 30 will not be included into the multivariate analysis part. Also, the women who has been ‘sterilized’, ‘declared her self as infecund’, ‘undecided about desire for more children’ are too will not included into multivariate analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Like; ‘having any vocational training’, ‘language education’ etc. out of formal school education.

<sup>4</sup> The traditionality scale will be composed a set of social practices relating to marriage that are seen as conservative and traditional as opposed to modern and contemporary. The variables will be used here are actually the variables examined in first part of the study above.

<sup>5</sup> It is expected to examine effect of ‘son preference’ in further birth intention

<sup>6</sup> Data on income from the household questionnaire will be used to look at household welfare. Household will be categorized as ‘low’, ‘middle’ and ‘high’ income groups for the approximate monthly household income.

<sup>7</sup> Family types will be categorised as ‘nuclear’ and ‘extended’ families

<sup>8</sup> A dummy dependent variable will be coded as ‘0=did not desire’ and ‘1=desired additional children’

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