

P4.5. Determinants of Timing of Marriage and Parenthood in Bangladesh: A Cohort Perspective - S. M. Mostafa Kamal, Islamic University, Bangladesh
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Background/Significance: Timing of marriage and parenthood mark the transition to adulthood; the points at which certain options in education, employment, and participation in society are foreclosed. Early entry into marriage and parenthood signifies a poor start of family formation and often embraces marital dissolution, health risks for mother and child which ultimately results social-physiological problems. Thus the intergenerational comparative study on the timing of family formation is of great importance as it may help in understanding the future direction of population transition of a country.

Objectives: The objectives of the study are:
to identify the factors affecting the timing of marriage and parenthood across generations
to investigate to what extent the factors are influencing family formation in Bangladesh.

Hypothesis: Women's education influences the timing of family formation, net of other socio-demographic factors.

Data and Methodology: Data for the present study have been taken from 2004 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey. The survey covered a nationally representative sample of 11,440 ever married women of reproductive age, of which 10,146 were found to have had at least one live birth. The survey gathered detailed information on age at first marriage and first birth, use of contraceptives etc.

To examine intergenerational change in family formation, the study women were grouped into three cohorts by their age in years: young (<25); younger (25-34) and elder (35-49) respectively. To meet the objectives, Cox proportional hazard model has been used to examine the association between timing of first marriage and parenthood and selected socio-demographic factors and also to quantify their relative risks.

Findings: The mean age at first marriage and first birth among the study women were found to be 15.01 and 17.40 years respectively. The findings of the study reveal that almost 85% of the sample women and 87% of the young women got married before age 18, the minimum legal age at marriage for females in Bangladesh. Overall, 80% of the women started childbearing in their teen ages, with reporting 89% among the young. The results of the Cox proportional hazard regression support that the young women were more likely to be married earlier and also have early childbearing, indicating a shorter transition to parenthood than their younger and elder counterparts. The findings are consistent with the hypothesis. The effects of secondary and higher education compared to illiteracy and primary education on family formation across the generations are unambiguous. Both cross sectional and multivariate analyses yielded quantitatively important and statistically significant estimates ($p < 0.001$) of the positive effect of women's education on age at marriage and childbearing. Besides, husband's education and occupation, childhood place of residence, religion and regions were found to have significant association ($p < 0.01$) with the timing of first marriage and parenthood. Although the effect of economic status was found insignificant in combined model but showed significant association with delayed timing of first marriage and longer transition into parenthood for the younger and elder women.

Knowledge Contribution: Early marriage and early childbearing are still common in Bangladesh. Findings of the study suggest that family formation did not significantly change across generations. Moreover, the younger women are tended to be married earlier and have hurry in childbearing compared to their elder counterparts. Programs should be taken to provide Information, Education and Communication (IEC) regarding the demerits of early marriage and early childbearing targeting the rural, lower educated and poor women. Expansion of female stipend program, prevention of dropping out from school and proper implementation of the ordinance of legal age at marriage may be fruitful to increase females' age at first marriage and timing of parenthood in Bangladesh.