

An Analysis of the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Divorce in Iran

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Introduction

Divorce rate has increased in recent decades in Iran. The purpose of this study is to answer the following research questions: What are the most important socio-economic characteristics of the divorced population in Iran, especially in terms of characteristics such as educational level, employment status, urban-rural residence, gender, and so on? How did these features change over time? What are the recent trends in divorce in Iranian society? And what are the differences between the provinces? Finally, to what extent can individual-level differences in socio-economic characteristics determine and predict probability of being divorced? We believe that the study of the trends in divorce rates and its socio-economic differentials can give a better understanding of the distributional pattern of divorce both over time, and within various socio-economic groups.

Material & Methods

Three data sources are used in the study: 1) registered data on the divorce by National Organization for Civil Registration; 2) aggregate results of Iranian Population and Housing Census (1986, 1996, 2006, 2011 and 2016); 3) the individual-level sample data from 2016 national census. In order to investigate the relative importance of different correlates of being in the divorced status, logistic regression model using STATA software has been applied for 2016 individual-level census data. We use the 2% individual data of the 2016 census to analyze the socioeconomic characteristics of those who have experienced divorce.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions

According to the findings of this study, divorce rates in Iran have increased over the last decade. This raising trend can be seen across all provinces of Iran. However, some provinces, such as Sistan-and-Baluchestan, Semnan, Yazd, and Chaharmahal-and-Bakhtiari have the lowest divorce rates in the country, and in contrast, provinces such as Tehran, Qom, Khorasan-

Razavi, and Kermanshah have the highest divorce rates in Iran.

Findings indicated that the percentage of people in divorced status witnessed an increasing trend from around 0.5 percent to 1.67 percent during each consecutive censuses carried out from 1986 to 2016. Also, the percentage of literate individual who are in divorced status was more than illiterates and showed an increasing trend over time along with the expansion of female education in Iran. According to our results, near half of divorced individuals was literate in 1986 and the figure increased to around 92 percent in 2016. In addition, findings indicated that most of divorces have occurred in the early years of marriage. Statistics on registered divorce showed that between 11 to 16 percent of all recorded divorces occurred in the first year of marriage and then sharply reduced in the next years. This pattern of divorce by the duration of marriage showed a stability over the last decade.

Multivariate analysis of data showed that the probability of remaining in divorced status is higher among Iranian women than men and higher among urban residents than the rural ones.

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Unemployed individuals have higher probability of being divorced than employed ones. According to our multivariate analysis, education showed a pattern of an inverted U-shaped relationships with divorce experience. When compared with lower or higher educational levels, those individuals who have secondary education or have high school diploma showed higher probability for remaining in divorced status. According to existing literature, increasing employment of highly educated women reduced divorce rates. It seems that the employment of educated women in Iran can make families more stable by reducing economic hardship. The extent to which university-employment engagement can influence the likelihood of divorce experience needs further research.

The present study analyzed some of the individual differences in socioeconomic characteristics of divorced people. However, the limitations of the variables in the census data do not allow us to assess the impact of many cultural and attitudinal factors which are not collected in the census data. Newer data and more research are needed to evaluate the contribution of many unexplored factors in this study.

Keywords: Divorce, Socioeconomic Correlates, Logistic Regression, Iran.

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