Socio-Demographic Attitude towards Emerging Forms of Family in Iran

Yaghoob Foroutan*
Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran
y.foroutan@umz.ac.ir

Introduction
According to the second demographic transition theory, the contemporary societies are facing an increasing range of emerging forms of family, which is the central focus of the present study. One of the main characteristics of the past centuries so-called ‘Golden Age’ was the importance of family and the stability of marital union. On the contrary, contemporary societies are witnessing substantial challenges in family ties and marital union. Some of these family challenges are the increasing proportion of unmarried individuals, growing age of marriage, substantial fall in birth and fertility rate, the increasing trends of divorce, childlessness, one-child family, single-parent family, and cohabitation. In particular, this article presents research-based evidence to explore patterns and determinants associated with attitudes toward emerging forms of family identified by childlessness, one-child family, single-parent family, and cohabitation.

Material & Methods
This analysis is based on a survey conducted in rural and urban areas of Ahvaz, Babolsar, Bojnord, Esfarayen, Gonbad Kavos, Kamyaran, Khoramabad, Mahmoudabad, Hamadan, and Saghez. The survey includes 4267 males and females aged 15 years old and over. The main independent variable of this analysis is the emerging forms of family, which is measured and identified by childlessness, one-child family, single-parent family, and cohabitation. In addition, the dependent variables of this study are classified in three major categories. The first category of independent variables refers to demographic factors: age, gender (males, females), place of residence (rural and urban areas), marital status, and level of education. The second category of independent variables is related to gender attitude. It is measured in this analysis by the attitude of individuals towards the male-breadwinner model and women’s employment outside the home. The last category of independent variables includes religiosity. It is measured in this analysis in three ways: individuals’ self-assessment about their religiosity, their attitudes towards women’s dress codes or hijab, and attitude towards women’s right to decide about dress codes or hijab.

Discussion of Results & Conclusion
On the basis of the preliminary results of this analysis, the following general patterns can be highlighted. First, childlessness is substantially unacceptable as only 2 percent of people hold positive attitude toward this emerging form of family. Second, about one-tenth of people are positive towards one-child family. Third, a relatively greater proportion of people hold positive attitudes towards both single-parent family and cohabitation since around 20 per cent of people are positive towards each of these two emerging forms of family. Moreover, these general patterns are significantly affected by three groups of determinants. It includes determinants related to gender attitudes, religiosity, and basic demographic determinants such as age, place of residence, marital status, and education. For example, the unmarried are more likely than the married to hold a positive attitude towards the emerging forms of family. It is even more visible and stronger among the divorced ones, as compared with both singles and the married. The divorced individuals are twice as likely as both singles and the married to hold a positive attitude towards the emerging forms of family. This applies to the all emerging forms of family considered in this study: one-child family, single-parent family, and cohabitation. Another example relates to the effect of educational level: the higher the level of education, the greater the proportion of people hold a positive attitude towards the all emerging forms of family including one-child family, single-parent family, and cohabitation. Another demographic determinant in this analysis is age composition which plays a significant role in the attitude towards emerging forms of family: while the older age cohorts are more conservative and largely hold negative attitude towards the all emerging forms of family, the opposite exists among the younger age cohorts. For instance, the proportion of positive attitude towards cohabitation amongst the younger cohort aged 15-24 years old is more than 5 times greater than the corresponding
proportion amongst the older cohort aged 50 years and above. This also reflects an overwhelming generational gap with regards to the social perception towards the emerging forms of family.

In conclusion, the results of this study can be mainly summarized and explained by the traditionalism-modernization model, suggesting that the positive attitudes towards emerging forms of family are substantially associated with modern and liberal beliefs: the stronger the later, the higher the former.

**Keywords:** Second Demographic Transition, Emerging Forms of Family, Childlessness, One-child Family, Single-parent Family, Cohabitation, Iran.

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