Differential transitions to adulthood a rapidly changing social context

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Context:

Turkey's modernization, socioeconomic development and accompanying social change, came into a new phase with the 1980s. Changes in its social life appear in areas such as extension of a free market economy, volatile economic growth during 1990s, continuing internal migration and urbanization, the liberation of social and political life, attempts of accession to the European Union, and globalization with its new social and cultural dimensions. These changes have had profound effects on individuals' lives. Turkey entered into the last phase of its demographic transition since the 1980s as well. The trends in fertility indicate that some parts of the population are already experiencing below replacement fertility, though there is no uniformity in change over the country.

Marriage and becoming a parent for the first time are the major life course transitions for an adolescent. In Turkey, marriage is almost universal and almost all births occur within marriage. Also, the marriage and fertility behavior is observed to be common among adolescent group. Because age at first marriage determines largely the onset of sexual activity in Turkey, it is one of the important factors affecting lifetime fertility. The age at first marriage tends to increase over the last two decades, especially for marriages at very young ages. However, for the Kurdish speaking especially age at first marriage still corresponds in the adolescent age group.

Research Questions:

The present study aims to investigate trends and variations of adolescent marriage and entry into first time motherhood in the context of socioeconomic, cultural and political changes in Turkey over the past two decades. We also intend to examine how the variations between the Turkish and Kurdish speaking adolescents are conditioned by socioeconomic and socio-cultural characteristics.

Methodology:

Descriptive part of the study begins to provide information on distribution of adolescent women, by background characteristics; knowledge and use of contraception among adolescents etc. The empirical part is based on proportional-hazard (or intensity regression) models that belong to a group of event-history models. The analysis aim to understand; 1) the change in adolescent marriage and first birth intensities over the two decades, 2) to what

extent the marriage and birth risks of the main mother tongue groups differ and how these are conditioned by individual level characteristics of adolescents.

The data stems from; '2003 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS-2003)'. The empirical analysis begins with a series of models, which are constructed by stepwise adding different set of covariates to previous models. In the first step we introduce a main effect model with age (to estimate marriage propensities), duration (to estimate first birth propensities), calendar period and mother tongue. Afterwards, we introduce subsequently childhood period characteristics (childhood place of residence, respondent's mother literacy, number of siblings); socioeconomic control variables (literacy, working status, husband's education) and for the first birth transition; socio-cultural control variables of the family-formation (marriage arrangement, bride's money, consanguinity and postnuptial residence).

Basic information about the data setup

Start event	Censoring	Terminal event
For first marriage: Date respondent turns to age 12	No marriage	Date respondent turns to age 20/Survey date/first marriage
For first birth: Date respondent turns to age 12	No first birth/termination of the first marriage	Date respondent turns to age 20/Survey date/first birth
For duration between first marriage and first birth: Date of first marriage	No first birth/termination of the first marriage	Date respondent turns to age 20/Survey date/first birth

Summary of Findings:

Some of the findings of analysis can be briefly stated as in the following. Preliminary results shows continuous decline of marriage and first birth risks since the beginning of 1980s, though intensities differ considerably by mother tongue. Turkish-speaking adolescents who read easily had the lowest transition rate to marriage and first birth. In contrast, Kurdish women, don't know Turkish, had the highest transition rates, meaning that they get marry and have their first child earliest.

The findings of the study confirm the significant role of education on adolescent marriage and fertility. Results demonstrate that to understand contemporary adolescent life course in Turkey, it is necessary to consider a combination of individual socioeconomic and cultural factors.