

## **Investigating developmental idealism and attitude towards marriage in Shiraz, Iran**

Aliyar Ahmadi<sup>1</sup>, Atefeh Ghorbanpour Dashtaki<sup>2</sup>, Shafieh Ghodrati<sup>3</sup>

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### **Introduction**

The present multifaceted study aims at investigating the youth's attitudes in the metropolitan Shiraz, south of Iran, toward developmental idealism and the extent to which developmental idealism has influenced their attitudes toward marriage. The paper is motivated by the premise that developmental ideas and models, specifically those concerning family life, have been disseminated widely around the world where they have become forces for ideational and behavioral change (Thornton 2001, 2005).

Early theories of the family stressed the importance of socio-economic factors as sources of variation (Thornton 2005). More recently, researchers have focused on the importance of ideational

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<sup>1</sup> . Assistant Professor of Demography, Department of Sociology and Social Planning, Shiraz University, Iran  
email:ahmadi@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

<sup>2</sup> . M. A in Demography, Department of Sociology and Social Planning, Shiraz University, Iran

<sup>3</sup> . Assistant professor, Department of Sociology, Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran

factors, including beliefs, values, attitudes, as influences on the behavior of the family (Bachrach, 2013 ; Fricke 1997; Johnson-Hanks et al., 2011)

Thornton (2001, 2005) propose that a collection of beliefs and values, which he terms developmental Idealism is an influential factor in family behavior. He has argued that these ideas about modern societies and modern families have been spread widely around the world, both among elites and non-elites, with implications for family behavior. Within the ideas of developmental idealism Thornton has identified both beliefs and values as important components, with values also being seen as belief statements that contain evaluations of the goodness or badness of an attribute. Thornton summarized the ideas of developmental idealism into four fundamental beliefs and values: (1) developed society is good; (2) the modern family is good; (3) development and the modern family are causally associated; and (4) individuals have the right to be free and equal, with social relationships being based on consent (Lai & Thornton 2015).

Developmental idealism is being an important starting point for social changes throughout many parts of the world. That is, family characteristics such as gender equality, optional marriage, delayed marriage, and low fertility rate could be deemed as both causes and consequences of development, simultaneously.

Thornton (2005) has presented evidence that developmental idealism beliefs and values have spread widely among societal elites in many parts of the world, with international family planning programs and related efforts concerning reproductive rights and women's empowerment being especially poignant examples of their growing legitimacy and power (Abbasi-Shavazi & Askari-Nodoushan 2012).

There are also data from ordinary people consistent with the idea that developmental thinking is both widespread and influential. Observers in such disparate locations as Africa, India, China, Nepal, and New Guinea have reported examples of ordinary people using the developmental or modernity framework in evaluating various attributes and behavior ( Ahearn 2001; Amin

1989). The growing researches all over the world has shown that the beliefs and values of developmental Idealism have spread not only to the world's rich and powerful individuals and to large international organizations but to the citizens of many countries throughout the world (Jong et al 2006).

As Thornton argued (2001, 2005), the dissemination and acceptance of developmental models have had an important effect on family life, both in the West and elsewhere. The acceptance of the ideas of developmental idealism can be a powerful force for altering a broad array of family structures and relationships, including childbearing, parent-child relationships, marriage, living arrangements, and relationships between wives and husbands (Jong et al 2006).

### **Data and Method**

The data of study come from a survey conducted in Shiraz city, the capital of Fars Province located in south of Iran. . The present multifaceted study aimed at investigating the youth's attitudes toward developmental idealism and the extent to which developmental idealism has influenced their attitudes toward marriage. Data has been collected from four hundred 18-34 youths in Shiraz through survey. A sample of 400 women of child bearing age (15-49 years-old) in Shiraz (based on Cochran's sample size formula with confidence level of 95% and alpha error of 0.05) were interviewed in 2015 via self-administered questionnaires. The participants were selected through random cluster sampling. Participants received a questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was assured using face validity. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted in order to gain the internal validity of the questionnaire and also to determine whether the questions were entirely understandable. The questionnaire contained questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, questions to identify the developmental idealism of participants and their attitudes towards marriage. Cronbach's alpha technique was used to determine the

reliability of the questionnaire, resulting in an alpha of 0.63 and 0.84 in scales. Statistical analysis was completed using SPSS version 18.

As for inferential analyses, Pearson correlation, Spearman rho, t-test and ANOVA were applied to determine the relationships between the dependent variable, and independent variables

## **Results**

Findings suggest that a vast majority of the participants look positively upon developmental idealism. Results from multivariate analysis revealed that gender, marital status, birthplace, ideal age for boys'/ girls' marriage, and religiosity are closely associated with the attitude toward marriage. So were gender, birthplace, and ideal age for boys' / girls' marriage, use of social communication venues, social trust, and social capital with developmental idealism. Furthermore, complexities of modern life and modern sexual relations were significantly associated with attitude toward marriage. Results from multivariate linear regression suggest that religiosity, complexities of modern life, developmental idealism concerning modern sexual relations, determine the attitude toward marriage. Causal path analysis was carried out to identify the direct and indirect impact of independent variables on the attitude toward marriage. It revealed that complexities of modern life, and modern sexual relations had direct impact; gender, social trust, marital status, and ideal age for boys'/ girls' marriage had one direct impact; and religiosity had both direct and indirect impact on the attitude toward marriage.

**Table 1- Socio-economic characteristics of Sample**

Variables	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Age groups</b>			<b>Marital Status</b>	
Less than 20	67	16.8	Single	218
20-24	182	45.5	Married	76
25-29	109	27.3	Widowed	2
30-34	38	9.5	Divorced	4
<b>Sex</b>			<b>Place of Birth</b>	
Male	242	60.5	Urban	332
Female	158	39.5	Rural	60
<b>Ideational Development</b>			<b>Education</b>	
Low	14	3.5	Illiterate	2
Medium	123	30.8	Primary	1
High	156	39.0	Middle	8
			High School	13
			Diploma	85
			College Studies	254

**Table 2- the relationship between independent variables and attitude towards marriage**

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig
Age	0.012	N.S
Income	0.16	N.s
Attitude towards ideal age of girls marriage	-0.195	***
Attitude towards ideal age of girls marriage	-0.231	***
Religiosity	0.350	***
Gender Equality	-0.071	N.s
Developmental Idealism (Living Arrangements)	-0.203	***
Developmental Idealism (Sexual Relations)	-0.356	***

**Table 3- the relationship between independent variables and attitude towards marriage**

	T-Test	Sig
Marital Status	-2/35	0.034
Residence	1.00	N.S
	<b>F-Test</b>	
Employment status	0.854	N.S

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