

THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE & WIDOWHOOD
ON FERTILITY IN EGYPT
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- (1) As it is well known, the variables that affect human fertility are numerous and complex in their interrelation. Davis and Blake have provided a very useful classification of means of fertility control which stand between the social organization and the social norms on the one hand and fertility on the other. The means that are included in the classification are called "intermediate variables" , among the intermediate variables, David and Blake mentioned :

Amount of reproductive period spent after or between unions :

- (a) When unions are broken by divorce, separation or desertion.
- (b) When unions are broken by death of husbands.

Ronald Freedman, The Sociology of Human
Fertility: A trend Report And Bibliography

The above variable is among others that are governing the formation and dissolution of unions in the reproductive period and affect exposure to intercourse.

The impact of divorce and widowhood on fertility differ from one society to another.

In Egypt divorce is permissible by law for Moslems "the majority" and for Christians in some specific conditions. The average divorce rate for the years 1971 - 1975 is 2.1%. Spouses of a broken union by divorce may return to the marriage life with each other "without a new marriage contract" within three months of divorce on agreement of husband. They need to have a new marriage contract if the period since divorce is more than three months.

Unions broken by death of husbands are affected by life expectancy and mortality rates for married males. The effect of such broken unions on fertility is dependable on age specific mortality rates.

The 1976 Egyptian population census revealed that among females aged 16 and over 19.7% have never married before, 64.7% were currently married and 15.6% were divorced or widowed. Comparing 1976 with 1960 population censuses we notice that the proportion of divorced and widowed females

in 1976 (15,6%) is less than in 1960 (20,4%). The proportion of never married females in 1976 is higher than in 1960 (12.1%).

The proportion of women currently married in each reproductive age group does not depend exclusively on the average age at which women marry and the proportion who never marry. It is also affected by the incidence of divorce, and death of spouse, by the extent to which divorcees and widows remarry and by the time elapsing before remarriage.

In this study I am going to reveal age structure of married, divorced and widowed Egyptian females. Averages of children everborn and children still living for each marital status will be discussed. The analysis will rely mainly on the returns of the "National Fertility Sample Survey" conducted by the CAPMAS in 1974/1975. More than 15000 ever married females interviewed." A stratified multi - stage sample design was set for the project. In the first stage 200 primary sample units (shiakhas and villages) were selected.

Table (1) presents the age distribution of married, widowed and divorced respondents as revealed from the NFS. More than four fifths of married respondents were in the childbearing age " less than fifty". Very few of them (3.29%)

were less than 20 years of age. For widowed and divorced females 31.02 % of them were in the child bearing age. The proportion increases by age "column 4, table 1".

Most of divorce events occur when spouses are young. Divorce statistics revealed that 48.45% of females who were divorced during the years 1971 - 1975, were less than 25 years (table 2). It can be predicted that the rising proportions by age in column 4, may be due to widowhood. Table (3) reveals that 8.44 % of respondents "who were less than 50 years by the time of interview", were either widowed or divorcees.

Divorce reduces the proportion of the reproductive period during which women are exposed to intercourse and would thus tend to have a depressing effect of fertility. The magnitude of this effect depends on the extent of remarriage and the amount of time elapsing before remarriage. The study revealed that 88% of all marriages were first marriages. Only 12% were second, third ... etc marriage. The average duration of marriage by age of respondents was as follows :

Age groups	- 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Duration of marriage	1.7	4.0	7.8	12.1	16.7	21.1	25.1	

It is clear that the periods of duration of marriage are highly correlated to ages of respondents. Respondents in the last age group of the childbearing span (45-49) were married for 25 years. Most of the respondents got married before age of twenty. Compared to their ages, they have a long reproductive period during which they are exposed to intercourses. In previous studies it has been proved that marriage rates for divorcees are high and that many of them remarry in a short period.

From the analysis of the NPS it is evident that respondents whose marital status by the time of interview was divorced or widowed, have fewer averages of children ever-born than married respondents.

This is true to all age groups of respondents in the child - bearing span, (table 4). Respondents who are married the first husband have higher fertility than those whose first marriage was terminated by divorce or widowhood and

and remarried again.

The standardised average of children everborn is 3.73 for respondents married to first husband, 3.15 to remarried respondents and 2.42 to widowed and divorced respondents.

Table (1)

Age Distribution of Married, Widowed and Divorced Respondents, 1974-1975
National Fertility Survey

Age groups	Married		Widowed & Divorced		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
-20	415	3.29	14	0.46	429	02.74
20-24	1562	12.37	58	1.90	1620	10.33
25-29	2065	16.35	85	2.79	2150	13.72
30-34	1750	13.86	98	3.21	1848	11.79
35-39	1819	14.41	136	4.46	1955	12.47
40-44	1415	11.21	233	7.64	1648	10.51
45-49	1243	9.48	322	10.56	1565	9.98
-50	10269	81.33	946	31.02	11215	71.54
+50	2358	18.67	2104	68.98	4462	28.46
Total	12627	100.00	3050	100.00	15677	100.00

CAFMAS : The National Fertility Sample Survey 1974-1975

Table (2)
Age distribution of
divorcees in Egypt, Averages for
(1971-1975)

Age groups	divorcees
16 -	15.68%
20 -	32.77%
25 -	18.11%
30 -	10.37%
35 -	7.30%
40 -	7.08%
45 -	
less than 50	95.70%
50 and more	4.30%
Total %	100.00%
Av. No.	74503

CAPMAS : Marriage and Divorce annual
Statistics

Table (3)

Distribution of Respondents in Child bearing Age Groups, by Marital
Status, 1974-1975 National Fertility

Survey

Age Groups	Married		Widowed & Divorced		Total	
	No. (1)	% (2)	No. (3)	% (4)	No. (5)	% (6)
- 20	415	96.74	14	3.26	429	100.00
20 - 24	1562	96.42	58	3.58	1620	100.00
25 - 29	2065	96.05	85	3.95	2150	100.00
30 - 34	1750	94.70	98	5.30	1848	100.00
35 - 39	1819	93.04	136	6.96	1955	100.00
40 - 44	1415	85.86		14.14	1648	100.00
45 - 49	1243	79.43	322	20.57	1565	100.00
- 50	10269	91.56	946	8.44	11215	100.00

Table (4)

Average Number of Children Everborn by Age and
Marital Status of Respondents in Child-
bearing Span, 1974-1975
National Fertility Survey

Age Groups	Married			Widowed & Divorced
	to first husband	Married more than once	Total mar- ried	
- 20	0.63	0.33	0.62	0.36
20 - 24	1.51	1.26	1.50	1.02
25 - 29	2.79	2.35	2.76	1.52
30 - 34	4.10	3.55	4.06	2.81
35 - 39	5.25	4.52	5.17	3.38
40 - 44	6.06	4.99	5.21	4.18

CAPMAS : The National Fertility Sample Survey 1974/1975.

Table (5)

Average Number of Surviving Children by Age
& Marital Status of Respondents in Childbearing Span

Age Groups	Married			Widowed & Divorced
	to first husband	married more than once	Total married	
- 20	0.54	0.33	0.54	0.36
20 - 24	1.30	1.04	1.29	0.84
24 - 29	2.28	1.89	2.34	1.33
30 - 34	3.39	2.76	3.34	2.29
35 3939	4.25	3.40	4.16	2.76
40 - 44	4.89	3.90	4.77	3.30