

Changing Gender Roles and Spousal Agreement on Fertility Intentions: A Case of Pakistan

Abstract:

Research has long recognized the importance of couple-level fertility preference and intentions for reproductive behavior and outcomes but few studies have been able to actually examine couples. Attention to gender issues and spousal dynamics in reproductive intentions is especially imperative in a patriarchal society experiencing changing gender role dynamics such as Pakistan. The aims of this study are to examine change over time in couple-level of disagreement in childbearing intentions and to see how changes in gender roles in Pakistani society, as evident from increases in women's education, is associated with spousal agreement on fertility intentions. In this study, I used couple-level data from the Pakistan Demographic Health Surveys (PDHS) of 1990-91 and 2012-13. Results show that spousal disagreement declined between 1990 and 2012, but when disagreement occurred, it was usually that the husband wanted another child when the wife did not. I also found that the risk of spousal agreement is higher among couples in which the wife is more educated than her husband. Further, in cases of disagreement, the odds that only the husband wants another child relative to only the wife wants another child are higher among couples in which wife has secondary and higher education. Decomposition analysis indicates that indicates that 56% of the overall change in spousal agreement on having another child is attributable to compositional changes in the population.