

ISLAM, REGIONAL CONTEXT, AND GIRLS' EDUCATIONAL DEFICIT

Kathryn M. Yount

Background

Access to primary education is basic to human development and the maintenance of democratic institutions.^{1,2} The achievement of mass education, or 90% of school-aged children attending primary school, also affects demographic changes associated with national development.^{3,4,5} Despite these benefits, girls' net primary enrollment rates are < 90% in 60 of 144 countries and trail those of boys in a plurality countries with available data.⁶

The causes of girls' primary educational deficits may overlap with the causes of girls' deficits on other dimensions of human development.⁷ For example, some scholars attribute girls' excess mortality to poverty, low urbanization, inadequate public services, and the under-representation of women in public life.^{8,9,10} Debates also persist about whether Islam affects girls' excess mortality and other aspects of human development after accounting for economic conditions and women's status in society.^{8,11,12,13,14,15,16}

Debates about whether or how Islam influences girls' human development unfortunately rely on conjecture, interpretations of Islamic doctrine rather than local practice,¹² and localized research.^{17,18} Scholars also have not examined specifically whether or how Islam influences girls' educational deficits, taking into account regional variation in the practice of Islam and in socio-economic and political circumstances. This project will fill these gaps in research and thereby promote an understanding of Islam's effects on an important dimension of human development and condition of democracy.

Data and Method

A macro-comparative analysis of the structural conditions associated with net primary

enrollment rates of girls, and with girls'-to-boys' net primary enrollment rates will be conducted. Crude associations of these outcomes and the following variables will be assessed: population prevalence of Islam (by Sect), women's representation in public life (% of ministerial positions held by women, adult female-to-male literacy rates, share of formal labor force that is women), economic conditions (gross domestic product per capita, distribution of individual incomes relative to equality, % of population urbanized, public expenditures per student as % of GDP per capita), and world region. Multivariate methods will be used to assess whether any crude association of the prevalence of Islam and each outcome remains after adjusting for measures of economic development, women's public status, and region. An interaction between region and religion will be added to assess whether adjusted associations of Islam and each outcome vary by region. Data will come from public sources of the Central Intelligence Agency,¹⁹ United Nations [UN] Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization,⁶ and UN Development Program.¹ This analysis will include over 110 countries representing all world regions.

ENDNOTES

¹ United Nations Development Program. 2004. *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*. New York: United Nations Development Program.

² David H. Kamens. 1988. Education and democracy: A comparative institutional analysis. *Sociology of Education*, 61(2): 114-127.

³ Caldwell, JC. 1980. Mass education as a determinant of the timing of fertility decline. *Population and Development Review* 6(2): 225–255.

⁴ Lloyd, C, C Kaufman, P Hewett. 2000. The spread of primary schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for fertility change. *Population and Development Review* 26(3): 483 – 515.

⁵ Wils, A, A Goujon. 1998. Diffusion of Education in Six World Regions, 1960 – 1990. *Population and Development Review* 24(2): 357 – 368.

⁶ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2004. *Global Education Digest: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

⁷ United Nations Secretariat. 1998. *Too Young to Die: Genes or Gender?* New York: Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

⁸ Preston, SH. 1976. *Mortality Patterns in National Populations: With Specific Reference to Recorded Causes of Death*. New York: Academy Press.

⁹ Koenig, Michael A., M.A. Khan, B. Wojtyniak, J.D. Clemens, J. Chakraborty, V. Fauveau, J.F. Phillips, J. Akbar, and U.S. Barua. 1990. Impact of measles vaccination on childhood mortality in rural Bangladesh, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 68(4): 441–447.

¹⁰ Hill, Kenneth and Dawn J. Upchurch. 1995. “Evidence of gender differences in child health from the demographic and health surveys”, *Population and Development Review* 21(1): 127 – 151.

¹¹ Caldwell, John C. 1986. “Routes to low mortality in poor countries”, *Population and Development Review* 12(2):171 – 220.

¹² Obermeyer, Carla M. 1992. “Islam, women, and politics: the demography of Arab countries”, *Population and Development Review* 18(1):33 – 60.

¹³ Yount, KM. 2001. Excess mortality of girls in the Middle East in the 1970s and 1980s: Patterns, correlates, and gaps in research. *Population Studies* 55(3): 291–308.

¹⁴ Morgan, SP, S Stash, HL Smith, KO Mason. 2002. Muslim and Non-Muslim Differences in Female Autonomy and Fertility: Evidence from Four Asian countries. *Population and Development Review* 28(3): 515–537.

¹⁵ Jejeebhoy, SJ, ZA Sathar. 2001. Women’s autonomy in India and Pakistan: The influence of religion and region. *Population and Development Review* 27(4): 687–712.

¹⁶ Weeks, JR. 1988. The Demography of Islamic Nations. *Population Bulletin*, 43(3).

¹⁷ Yount, KM. 2004. Symbolic Gender Politics, Religious Group Identity, and the Decline in Female Genital Cutting in Minya, Egypt. *Social Forces* 82(3): 1063–1090.

¹⁸ Yount, K.M. (forthcoming). Women, Gender and Health in Muslim Societies, an Historical Perspective. *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*. (Suad Joseph, Ed) Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency [CIA]. 2004. *World Factbook 2004*. Washington, DC: CIA.