Changing patterns of family formation among internally displaced populations in Yemen: Evidence from cross-sectional surveys

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Motivation

Yemen has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the Middle East and North Africa region and is home to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. How the conflict and resulting displacement have impacted family formation patterns is not entirely clear. In this study, we investigate the impact of displacement on child marriage and early childbearing by comparing time-to-first-marriage and time-to-first-birth among displaced and non-displaced girls.

Methods

We used data collected through cross-sectional multistage stratified cluster household surveys in three governorates in Yemen with high concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Employing an analytic sample 1,861 girls aged 15-24, we compared entry into first marriage and time to first birth between IDPs and non-displaced persons using Kaplan Meier curves and Cox regressions.

Results

We found high rates of child marriage in this population, with 37.8% and 34.5% of ever-displaced and never-displaced girls aged 20-24 married before age 18. Overall, those who were displaced had 30% higher hazard of overall marriage compared to their host counterparts (95% CI 1.16 – 1.47), and 23% increased hazard of child marriage (95% CI 1.01 – 1.51). Stratification by governorate revealed heterogeneity across governorates, with displaced populations at higher hazard of marriage in Aden and Maarib but not in Hadramout. We found that child brides experienced a 19% lower hazard of first birth compared to those married over 18, indicating that child brides tended to wait before first birth (HR 95% CI 0.72 – 0.92). We did not find a significant association between displacement status and time-to-first-birth after adjusting for child marriage status.

Conclusion

Our results highlight the impact of forced displacement on time-to-first-marriage and suggest that those who are displaced are more vulnerable to child marriage. We did not find compelling evidence for early marriage driving an increase in early childbearing. Nonetheless, our findings highlight the need for interventions that focus on prevention and mitigation of child marriage in this setting, particularly among IDPs who are at increased vulnerability.

Figure 1: Survival distribution of marriage comparing hosts to displaced populations across and within the three governorates

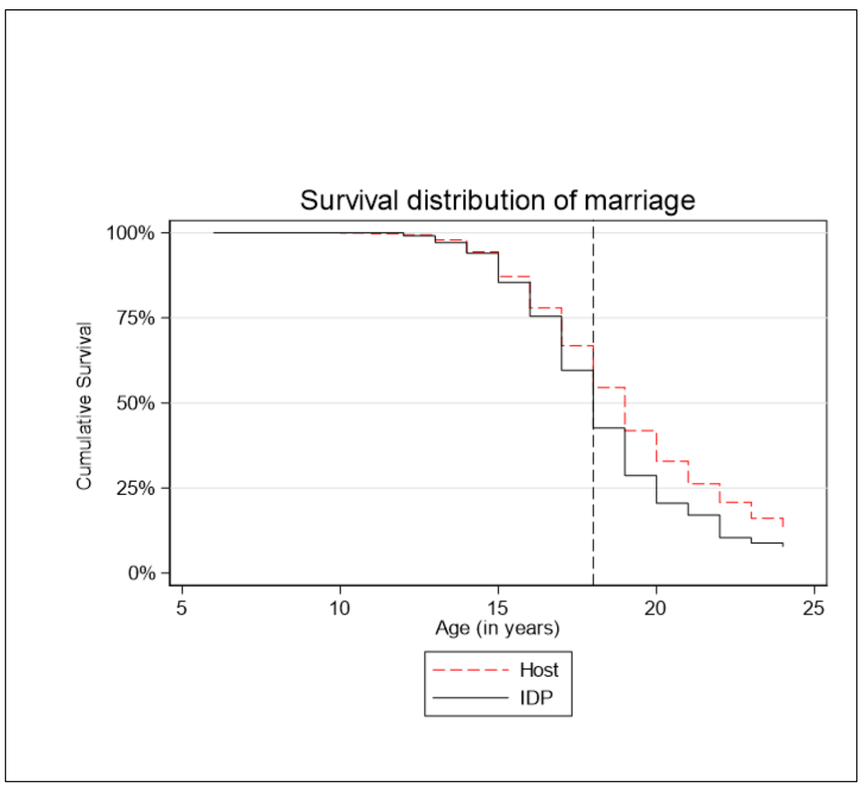


Table 1: Hazard of marriage and child marriage comparing displaced to host populations among girls aged 15-24

	Total		Aden		Hadramaut		Ma'arib	
	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI
Hazard ratio of marriage	1.31*	1.16 – 1.47	1.67*	1.26 – 2.22	1.05	0.82 – 1.33	1.25*	1.07 – 1.46
Hazard ratio of child marriage	1.23*	1.01 – 1.51	1.84*	1.30 – 2.62	1.09	0.74 - 1.61	0.93	0.66 – 1.31

Figure 2: Survival Distribution of childbearing comparing girls married <18 to those married ≥18 and comparing hosts to IDPs

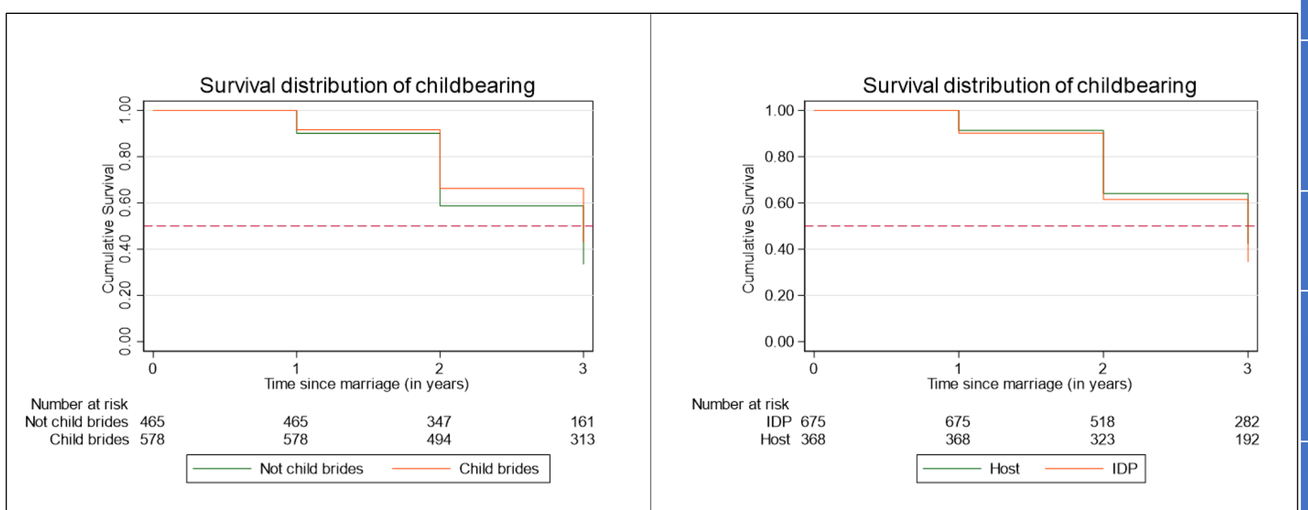
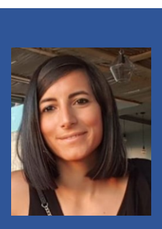


Table 2: Hazard of first birth comparing girls married <18 to those married ≥18 and comparing hosts to IDPs

	Total	
	Estimate	95% CI
Hazard ratio of birth (Ref: girls married ≥18)	0.81*	0.72 – 0.92
Hazard ratio of birth (Ref: hosts)	1.15*	1.01 – 1.32
Adjusted hazard ratio of birth (Ref: girls married ≥18)	0.82*	0.72 – 0.93
Adjusted hazard ratio of birth (Ref: hosts)	1.13	0.98 – 1.30



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