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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Public Demography for Narrowing Research-policy Gap in Iran

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Abstract: Demographic discourses in the media or public inform lay people and may impact population planning and policies. Understanding the situation and characteristics of public demographic discourses in Iran helps the government and policy makers to identify experts' advice to use in effective policymaking and to discern public perceptions and understanding of population policies and promote changes in fertility behavior. The aim of this paper is to examine public demographic discourses which are produced and reproduced in the Iranian media to affect fertility policy and decision making after the announcement of General Population Policies by the Supreme Leader in 2014. This paper uses the critical discourse analysis for analyzing demographic discourses in websites of two influential Iranian newspapers, i.e., *Keyhan* and *Iran*, and demographers' ideas and opinions available online during 21 March 2010 and 21 May 2016. The critical discourse analysis illustrates that the main discourse for public demography is "Conceptual". Analyzing texts indicates that demographers have tried to reduce the gap between science – policy by disseminating simple and understandable demographic discussions in the media. They argue that demographic issues are specialized topics and require scientific and rigorous research. Therefore, the first step for policymaking and planning is the recognition and understanding of population situation. Public demography intends to facilitate the formulation of an evidence-based policymaking to achieve General Population Policy objectives. Policymakers are recommended to provide favorable social and economic contexts supporting family formation and childbearing towards sustainable population growth outlined in the General Population Policies. Public demography has a vital role in providing a deeper understanding of future population trends and policies.

Keywords: Public Demography; Demographic Discourse; Critical Discourse Analysis; General Population Policies.

Introduction

In 2014, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced the General Population Policies (GPP) for the country towards national authority in response to the declining population and fertility rates in the country. The GPP has outlined various population objectives including, but not limited to, the rise of fertility to above replacement level, population health, seizing the demographic dividend, and sustainable population and environment. Population health has been envisaged through the implementation of Clauses 3, 6 and 7 of the GPP specifically focusing on the health of pregnant mothers, the health and well-being of the population, and the health of the elderly. This announcement was a strategic plan for new population policy that has impacts on public health as well as the future of population in Iran, and led to many discursive forces which disseminated various interpretation of the GPP. Therefore, one major duty of demographers in contemporary Iran is to provide real, scientific, and understandable evidence and analysis about fertility rate and other measures of the

population situations that is a prerequisite for a successful implementation of population policies.

Policymakers need to have a deeper understanding of the demographic features of the country for their planning. Production and distribution of different discourses in media leads to a better understanding of the public on population dynamics and raise expectations from the government about welfare services and healthcare systems. The gap between real needs and expectations is an important issue for planning. Policymakers usually plan to meet real needs based on available resources but they are simultaneously under pressure from the media highlighting public opinion regarding their expectations. One of the main factors on effective policy implementation is the “individuals involved” (Tezera, 2019: 94), and thus, “public acceptability is increasingly considered to be an important factor in the design of effective policy” (Bicket and Vanner, 2016:1). This issue affects the quality of policy-making and indicates the importance of public understanding of the country's demographic situation. At this juncture, demography and

policymaking intersects with the media, and the public demography makes sense.

Public demography is a presentation to non-specialists about population-related issues. These presentations may shape the mental image of lay people about society, state, power relationships, welfare, and form a national or international conversation about these issues and guide the design of more effective policies. According to Donaldson (2011: 2) “the most important contribution of public demography is better-informed discussions about important public policy matters that would lead to more appropriate interventions and better policies and programs”. This indicates the research-policy relations and functions of scientific knowledge. Contemporary universities work under the cognitive shifts (Delanty, 2001) that new conceptions of citizenship and public understanding of science are emerging. In this context, old cultural gap between researchers and policymakers are narrowing, because a range of potentially influential players such as

journalists and public scientists translate scientific knowledge to simple and understandable words enabling policymakers to become familiar with scientific findings and help them to make better decisions and policies. In this way, the relationship between research and policy communities is strengthened.

There exists scant literature in Iran which has caused researchers to pay attention to demographic changes and population policies but they have not underscored the role of public demography in the media for achieving population and health policy objectives. This paper aims to review media discourses on demographic change in Iran and illustrates the role of public demography in the effectiveness of GPP. The article is based on the findings of a research project¹ that was conducted in 2015 and shows discursive dynamics based on data from 21 March in 2010 to 21 May 2016. It should be noted, however, that at the time of writing this paper in 2020, it was not surprising to find some changes in the

¹ The Project name is “Studying the Characteristics of Demographic Discourses in Media”, and is supported by Iran National Science Foundation

demographic discourse due to the presence of public demography, changing socio-political context of the country as well as the consequences of Covid-19.

Conceptual Framework: Demographic Discourses and Role of Media

It has been well-established that the media plays a crucial role in framing public health debates and shaping public perceptions by disseminating the issues that are reported and the way they are represented (Henderson and Hilton, 2018). The media has a profound impact on public opinion and public acceptability. As Bicket and Vanner (2016:3) noted "The repetition and prominence of messages in the media strongly inform the salient issues in an individual's mind at any given moment of opinion-formation or decision-making". The media provides content and form public views about health problems and their potential solutions. They manufacture discourse that is favorable to the interest of a stakeholder or an interest group which may be contrary to the scientific idea. In this respect, it is necessary to consider the role of media in demographic research in shaping

public views about population situation. Although, very few studies have considered this subject, there are many articles on the role of media in other scientific subjects, especially in health campaigns (Rothman and Salovey, 1997; Nutbeam, 2000; DeJong, 2002; Dorfman, Wallack and Woodruff, 2005; Noar, 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Saraf, RJ; Balamurugan, 2018) and health education (Yanovitzky and Stryker, 2001; Bergsma, 2004; Levac and O'Sullivan, 2010; Niederkrotenthaler *et al.*, 2010; Chapman *et al.*, 2014; Anderson *et al.*, 2016; Alshammari and Alshammari, 2017).

These types of research consider media just as a tool and ignore it as an effective actor (Yanovitzky and Stryker, 2001; Quattrin, 2015; Alshammari *et al.*, 2017). However, the role of media in scientific fields is much more than the mere transfer of specific information (Hodgetts and Chamberlain, 2006). Saraf and Balamurugan (2018) give high value to the role of mass media in the health development field, and this role can be extended to other fields such as demography.

The media can also form public attitudes toward population plans and policies, and in particular change public perceptions on

childbearing and fertility. According to Mahmoodi, Mohammadpur and Rezaei (2015:1884) “interference in the life affairs of people and its most private aspects as an integral part of population management cannot be achieved simply in the form of Top-Down planning unless it takes the form of a prevalent discourse”. This is what Foucault (2017) argued about the relationship between language and power. Media produce and promote diverse discourses and form the order of discourses. It means that there are many dominant and conflicting discourses in a period of time. Norman Fairclough (1992) expanded the Foucauldian discursive order and explained that there is a dominant ideological form that has become normal and naturalized. He considers dialectical appropriateness between the micro-discourse structures that are manifested in language and linguistic features and the older structures of society (ideology and social structures). He (Fairclough b 1992) considers language as social action, and in common with Foucault, believed that events and texts come out of the relations of power and enter into the challenges of power. Thus, critical discourse

analysis (CDA) shows the role of discourses in two directions: (a) maintaining power relations through naturalization or preservation of the Old Order of Discourses; (b) Changing power relations in the social world or creating New Order of Discourses. Using CDA, we aim to uncover demographic discourses in media and reveal their roles in shaping public opinions towards population issues and policies.

Researchers and demographers have critical role for making demographic discourses. They are authentic news resources and media interview with them or make news form their findings. Researchers use media to relate to policy sphere and affect public policy too. This indicates research-policy relationships that can be illustrated by various models. This relationship can be categorized to two basic approaches which are named as “research *for* policy” and “research *of* policy”. The research for policy approach is equivalent to problem solving, engineering or instrumental, while the research of policy approach is equivalent to critical or conceptual. In the first instance, the problem is usually taken as a given and it is only the

solution that is of relevance, whereas in the latter, both the problem itself and the solution are made to be problematic. As Desjardins and Rubenson (2009) argued:

“The problem - solving approach takes the problem as it is. The aim is to make the existing order of social and power relationships, and the institutions in which these are embedded to function smoothly by resolving the problems that face or threaten this overall context. This simplifies the task at hand, and makes it easier to arrive at results which appear to have general validity. This is in contrast to the critical approach. Here the emphasis is on taking a step outside of the prevailing order of the world and ask how that order came about. The origin of institutions and social power relations, whether they are changing and what is causing those changes, are brought directly into question. The task is to understand the processes of change by constructing the whole rather than sub-dividing the problem into separate parts and limiting the issue to be dealt with. ... The “conceptual position” developed as a criticism against

the narrow interpretation of instrumentalism. The role of research is not primarily seen as coming up with a solution and/or answer to a specific issue but rather helps develop a broader understanding of the underlying problem. This involves widening the debate, reformulating the problem, clarifying goals, and analyzing eventual conflicts between multiple goals. Instead of being of direct instrumental use, the primary function of research is conceptual.”(Desjardins and Rubenson, 2009)

In Iran, after reaching the population growth rate above 3 percent per annum in 1986 (Roudi-Fahimi, 2002) the government formalized the fertility control policy. Maternal and Child Health Care services as well as health education were provided across the country (Shadpour, 2000; Mehryar *et al.*, 2001), media disseminated the slogans of the “two children is enough”, “few children - better life”, and “small family size” ideals. By these implicit and explicit policies, the total fertility rate (TFR) reached the replacement level in 2000 (Jafari *et al.* 2016) and further declined to 1.8 in 2011 (Abbasi Shavazi and Hosseini-

Chavoshi, 2012). However, TFR raised to around 2.1 by 2016 before declining to 1.8 by 2019. Iranian media played a critical role in raising public awareness about decreasing population growth rate (Simbar, 2012) and advocating for new population policies. Some believe that population policies are based on prevalent discourses more than thoughts of development, economy, and demography

(Jafari, et al. 2016). Studying discourses of public demography is thus needed to understand media function in creating new demographic order in contemporary Iran. Accordingly, the main concepts of the research are Old and New Order of Demographic Discourse, Media, Scientific Research, Prevalent Discourses, and Thoughts of Development, Economy, etc. (Figure 1).

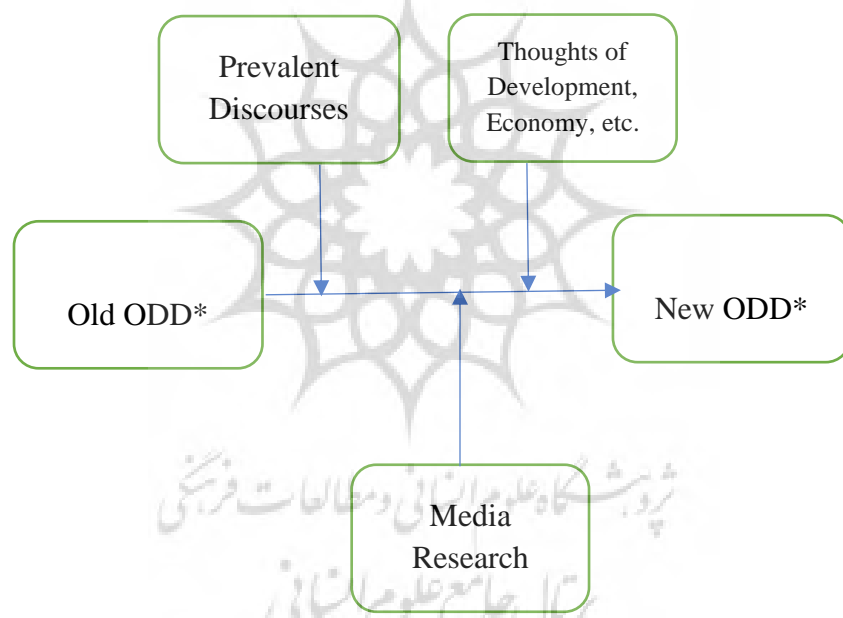


Fig. 1. Conceptual Research Framework (*ODD: Order of Demographic Discourse)

Background Studies on Mass Media, Demography and Public Health

Fertility is a common subject for health and demography fields. Empirical analysis by

Barber and Axinn (2004) showed that exposure to the mass media affects attitudes about childbearing. Hornik and McAnany (2001) found that fertility desires and

intentions appear to be influenced by the media. Rabbi (2012: 383) noted that "the process mainly used to stop the increasing fertility rate is the proper utilization of mass media, by upholding the demerits of increased populations and its consequences". Many studies have shown that mass media affected the low fertility rate by shaping attitudes toward family planning, and changing public views by establishing a small-family norm in India (Kulkarni, 2003), Bangladesh (Mehryar *et al.*, 2001; Boulay, Storey and Sood, 2002; Kamal *et al.*, 2013; Kamruzzaman, Md; Hakim, 2015), Nepal (Boulay, Storey and Sood, 2002), and Ghana (Akafuah, RA; Sossou, 2008; Hindin, McGough and Adanu, 2014). Informal educational campaigns by the mass media contributed to the reduction of fertility in post-revolutionary Iran (Abbasi Shavazi, *et al.* 2008). By 1996, the majority of rural communities had access to electricity, TV, radio and piped water in Iran (Abbasi-Shavazi *et al.* 2009) and this facilitated the transfer of knowledge on fertility behavior through new media in rural areas of the country. Despite the important role of media on changing demographic behaviors, little research has

been undertaken on the role of public demography on population policies in Iran. This paper focuses on public demography by critical discourse analysis of media representation of declining fertility and population growth rate in Iran. Our main objective is to, first, recognize demographic discourses in Iranian mass media, and second, to identify policy - science relationships through media discourses that affect the realization of GPP.

Methodology

This study falls within the boundaries of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and its objectives concern the examination of texts in newspaper websites to characterize types and attributes of discourses in public demography in Iran. To achieve this aim, this research is informed by Fairclough (1992) who defines discourses as broad patterns of systems of statements that are taken up in particular discussions. Discourse structures what can be said or not, what counts as true or not. It constrains what can be thought and prescribes what can be done. In Fairclough's words: Discourses are part of a broader system that

structures the relationship among them. Every social field and institution is constituted of a corresponding order of discourse. The order of discourse is the semiotic aspect or the discursive dimension of an institution or organization, and, it is the sum of all the different discourses that are found within a given social domain" (Fairclough, 1989: 31). Fairclough proposed a three-dimensional framework of analysis that includes three levels: the text, the discursive practice, and the social practice.

1. In the first stage, the object of analysis, namely text is studied. Text analysis is a description phase and for doing it, the linguistic features of the text and association between formal features of the texts and social values are described. To operationalize the text in the first stage, this research carried out a semantic analysis (1992), and looks at *nominalization*, *modality*, *classification*, and *adjectives* to analyze texts. "Modality is a semantic concept that refers to the speaker's attitude or opinion towards the truth of a proposition, as well as the situation or

event described in the sentences, and includes meanings such as ability, possibility, probability, necessity, permission, obligation and volition" (Mora Lopez, 2012: 40). It is through a modality that the reports express their recognition with the statements of others or present their comments on the event or the people involved. Thus, modality works as a bridge between the media and the historical backgrounds.

Nominalization is the use of nouns for actions. It helps to weaken the sense of action and impersonalize the processes, and thus, the media try to look unbiased as possible.

Classification refers to the naming and representing people and events. By choice of vocabulary, classification creates means. Different means reflect the reporter attitude towards the person being referred to and produce a different impression on the readers (Zhang, 2014). By analyzing the mentioned factors, we can achieve (a) empirical, relational and expressive values of the morphological properties

of the texts; and (b) empirical, relational, and expressive values of the syntactic properties of the texts.

2. The second stage is concerned with the processes of production and consumption of the text and, identifies how certain conditions contribute to the production of the text and how those same conditions also influence the interpretation (Mbislamakoro, 2014). In this stage, interdiscursivity that is using existing discourse in the production of texts and intertextuality that is using other text in the production of the new text is studied, too. In other words, texts may be hybrid in regard to genre, style, and discourse. "When different discourses originating from different social domains and institutions are drawn from in a text, it gives rise to interdiscursive hybridity" (Mbislamakoro, 2014: 14). We looked at what different discourses found in the public demographic texts are, how they are articulated together, and what the potential consequences of this re-

articulation of the demographic discourse with other discourses can be.

3. In the third stage, the relationship between text and the wider social context is analyzed. It is the explanation phase and considers social analysis. For the third level, we inquire into what the ideological, social, and political consequences of the analyzed texts can be. We ask whether public demographic texts change or maintain the order of discourse of the society, whether it challenged existing power relations or reproduced it.

Sampling and Selection Criteria

This study is conducted in the sociopolitical context of Iran and used (a) the websites of two important newspapers in Iran: "Keyhan" and "Iran" which are mainstream and conventional newspapers in the country that most people know them and support the official lines of the government and the Islamic Republic. (b) Experts' writing and/or interviews available online.

The study examines samples from 21 March in 2010 to 21 May 2016. Two newspaper's websites are searched by four Persian keywords: Siasathaye jamiati (population policies), Taghyire Jamiati (population transitions), Kaheshe jamiat (population decline), and Afzayeshe jamiat (population increase). To conduct sampling, we made a complete list of acquired texts. In order to analyze experts made discourses, Google search engine is searched by using two keywords: Jamiatshenas (demographer) and Siasathaye jamiati (population policies). According to the search results demographers have the most active roles in public demography. In both sampling, the search was continued to reach theoretical saturation. The analysis was performed by the authors and their common interpretations are used in every phase.

Findings

Description Phase

Studying semantic attributes of texts using nominalization, modality, classification, and adjectives discover discourses in different texts. A few examples of nominalization

include single child (Iran, 2 Dec. 2012), aging disease (Iran, 2 Nov. 2013), and fertility as a right of citizenship (Iran, 26 June 2014). Using imperative and declarative modalities are common in demographers' statements (Farda, 28 Apr. 2010; ISNA 28 Jan. 2014; Pars, 4 Feb. 2015, etc.). Media and experts use more adjectives in demographic texts. Dangerous (Iran, 4 Feb. 2015, etc.), important (Keyhan, 22 Dec. 2013, etc.), ageing (Keyhan, 25 Dec. 2013, etc.), false (Keyhan, 22 May 2014; 28 May 2014, etc.), and specialization of demographic situations and policies (Iran, 2 Nov 2014; ISNA, 31 Dec. 2014; Etelaat, 21 Jan 2015; Sep. 29 Apr. 2010, etc.) and research-based findings (Mehr News Agency, 14 Oct 2014, etc.) are examples of adjectives that describe demographic situation of Iran.

In brief, analyzing texts indicates characteristics of demographers' discourses. Demographers argue that population issues are specialized topics and require vigorous scientific research. They express that the first point for policymaking and planning is a deep understanding of the issues. They emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary participation in understanding population

problems, and criticize hasty decisions for quick-fixing long-term problems, and underestimating the importance of the benefits of demographic window of opportunity. For demographers, quality of population is as important as its quantity. They propose supporting the increase in fertility rates to the replacement level (MehrKhane, 12 March 2013, etc.), regional population planning (JameJam, 3 Nov. 2015, etc.), facilitating marriage (IRNA, 21 Aug. 2012; MojeRasa, 7 July 2014; IRNA, 14 Oct. 2014; IRNA 31 Dec. 2014; etc.), migration management (FARDA, 28 Apr. 2010; JameJam 3 Nov 2015; Fars News, 8 May 2010; etc.), managing environmental issues (IRNA, 12 Nov. 2015; etc.), youth empowerment (Iran, 6 July 2014; MojeRasa 7 July 2014; IRNA, 14 Oct. 2014; etc.), and increasing population quality (Mehr News, 1 June 2014, Keyhan 23 May 2014; IRNA, 21 Aug. 2012, etc.) as sustainable solutions overcoming the population issues in the country. Four domains and areas are evident in the discourse of public demographers: direct and indirect casual conditions, problem definition,

evaluation of family planning program, and strategic plans.

Fairclough (1992) paid particular attention to encoding ideological differences in words. Morphologically, since the topic is described as a problem or issue in the demographers' texts, modality is a main factor in these texts. The most frequent modality is *epistemic modality*. According to Mora Lopez (2012:41) "Epistemic modality belongs to the speaker's knowledge concerning an event, and thus, involves estimations on the likelihood of the realization of the event". This type of modality indicates authority of science sphere. Emphasize on this modality in demographers' texts indicates the necessity of knowledge-based approaches.

Syntactically, most of the analyzed texts are active. The producers of the texts mainly use active voice to show that described nominations and adjectives are about a real and statistical phenomenon. However, a few sentences have uncertain actors and have been written in passive voice. These texts are used when demographers wanted to criticize other claims. According to Fairclough (1992) there is ideological motive for using passive voices.

Other making is used in demographers' texts to define the other group as "they" or "you".

The main characteristics of these texts are:

Demographers use their scientific findings to portray Iran's population situation and try to affect public policy and decision-making processes. They described population status as "declining fertility to below-replacement level", "unbalanced population structure", "low population growth that has not yet become negative", "demographic window of opportunity" and "golden potential"; and believe that labeling population situation as a "danger", "threat", "concern", "extinction", and "generational interruption" increase the gap between science and policy or "evidence – policy gap" (Cairney and Oliver, 2017).

Interpretation Phase

Our analysis suggests that the main attribute of discourse making in public demography is an explanation of the present and future status of the population in Iran, and proposed strategy by considering various aspect of demography that are mentioned in GPP. For constructing discourse, demographers mentioned such phrases as "increasing the age of marriage

(MojeRasa, 7 July 2014; Keyhan, 3 Sep. 2014, Keyhan, 24 Feb 2016; KabarOnline, 16 Feb. 2011; etc.), rise of divorce (Iran, 15 Dec. 2016; Iran, 4 Feb. 2015; Keyhan 8 Jun. 2014; Keyhan, 13 Aug. 2014; ISNA, 28 Jan. 2014; etc.), the rising trend of rate of emigration (ISNA, 28 Jan. 2014; DonyayeEghtesad, 23 Jan. 2013; etc.), and high birth intervals (Keyhan 18 May 2014; Armane Emruz, 14 Apr. 2016; etc.)" as direct factors affecting fertility rate. In their view psychological, economic and social factors affect fertility indirectly. Anxiety and insecurity about the future (Iran, 27 Jan. 2016; Keyhan 7 July 2014; Farda 28 Apr. 2010; etc.), uncertainty among young people about the ability to provide living expenses (Keyhan, 24 June 2014; MehrNews, 1 June 2014; etc.), and changes in the couple's mentality (HalgheyeVasl, 30 Apr. 2015) constitute psychological factors. Dissatisfaction with the economic situation (KhabarOnline 16 Feb 2011; MehrNews 1 Jun. 2014; Keyhan 17 Jun 2013; Iran 27 Jan. 2016), housing demand (ISNA, 25 Jun 2015; Keyhan 20 Dec. 2013; etc.), unemployment (Keyhan, 7 July 2016; Keyhan, 23 May 2014, etc.), recession and inflation (Etelaat, 24 June 2014; etc.),

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economic insecurity (MehrKhane, 16 July 2014; etc.) and the lack of marriage opportunities for 20 to 30-year-olds (Etelaat, 21 Jan. 2015; Iran, 21 Apr. 2015; etc.) form economic factors. Also, the growth of urbanization (Iran, 26 Sep 2013; Iran 26 Jul 2014, ISNA 28 Jan. 2014; etc.), the level of women's literacy (ISNA 30 Oct. 2013; KhabarOnline, 1 Jul. 2014; etc.) and the rate of women's social participation (Keyhan 1 Feb. 2016; etc.), changes in lifestyle and women's demands (Iran 4 Feb. 2015; Keyhan 18 Aug. 2014; etc.), raising women's awareness of their social rights (Radio Zamane, 14 May 2016; etc.), and changes in marital behavior (ISNA, 28 Jan. 2014) are named as social factors.

Demographers assesses family planning program as a tool for preventing high-risk deliveries and health of mothers the success of which in Iran is seen exemplary and as the sign of pride in the world", and thus, consider its elimination as "fault" (ISNA, 28 Jan. 2014). They define population issues as "imbalance of the substitute rate (Iran, 4 Feb. 2015; Keyhan 28 Jan. 2014; Keyhan 16 Jul. 2014; etc.), lack of comprehensive scientific reports on the current situation of demography (Salamat

Online, 20 Feb. 2016; Iran, 2 Jun. 2014; etc.), unbalanced population density (ISNA, 28 Jan. 2014; ISNA, 25 Jun. 2015; MehrNews 14 Oct 2014; etc.), negative population growth (Fars 12 Jan. 2017; JameJam Online 4 Aug. 2012; Hodana, 3 May 2016; etc.) and changing age structure (IRNA, 21 Aug. 2012; Donyaye Eghtesad, 23 Jan. 2013; etc.). To resolve these demographic problems, their discourse include five strategies: (1) Political: for instance implementing policies that convince people that their future is guaranteed, and implementing regional policies to prevent rural to urban migration. (2) Cultural: creating a change in culture, increasing social awareness and making change in attitudes. (3) Economic: strengthening the industry, free public insurance, providing welfare and occupational facilities for women are advised. (4) Geographical: such as reduction in population density and making continues development plans. (5) Social: providing health, education and welfare services to balance demographic behaviors; infertility treatment, reducing the age of marriage, and empowering youth are suggested.

It seems that public demographers determine responsibility for themselves as a bridge to decline research- policy gap. According to them, assisting the government to identify population situation and appropriate policies and strategies for the proper implementation of policies is the task of demographers. As it can be seen in these texts, language appears in the form of writing and is used to justify, criticize, response, react, and offend. For better interpretation, understanding of the interdiscursivity is important. To understand interdiscursivity, it is needed to review related discourses in the history of Iran.

From the first thoughts to the quantity and quality of the Iranian population up to now, there exist four mega - discourses of fertility and demography in Iran: Modernity, Islamic, Reformism, and fundamentalism.

A) The first demographic discourse is related to *Red Lion and Sun Society* in 1951 that popularized contraceptives, and it had the support of clergy such as Ayatollah Sheikh Bahoddin Mahallati (Mehryar *et al.*, 2001). Affected by this discourse, a new position of the Deputy Minister for Health and

Population was created in the health ministry in 1967 that distributed the thought of "fewer children, better life" (Tober, Taghdisi and Jalali, 2006). It reproduced two sub-discourses in Iran: (1) modernization by making institutions and systems such as the institution of civil registration that leads to observing the rights; and (2) the discourse of human development by improving the quality of life for children and mothers, and the ban of marriage for girls before age 16.

B) Islamic discourses: after the Islamic revolution in Iran, there exists three Islamic sub-discourses that are named as (1) Islamic Idealism, indicated by restoration and implementation of pure Islamic values and replacing geographical borders by ideological ones for Ummah, and thus, population is a source of power for this discourse and population increase is needed (Mahmoodi, Mohammadpur and Rezaei, 2015), Islamic pragmatism (Malekafzali, 2004; Tober, Taghdisi and Jalali, 2006) that focused on Islam and Iran as Islamic utopia that should be the origin and exporter of Islamic revolution, and fertility control is considered as suitable and necessary for Iran, and (3) Islamic realism

(Mahmoodi, Mohammadpur and Rezaei, 2015) that rationalism, pragmatism, and national interests were the principles of the government. This discourse considers Iran as a utopia and defines it as a developed and reformed nation, and accordingly it is needed to control its population to a reasonable extent to be able to make Iran as a rich country.

C) Reformist discourse: the main principles are pragmatism, realism and dialogue. It emphasizes on civil society, social and individual freedoms and socio-political development. Its demographic policy is similar to the Islamic realism.

D) Fundamentalist discourse: this discourse divides the globe to selves and others based on accepting American policies or not. It

reproduced Islamic Idealism and encouraged increasing in fertility rate to save Islamic culture and identity (Mahmoodi, Mohammadpur and Rezaei, 2015).

Reviewing scientific discourse in this field shows that there are four mega-discourses. According to Mbismakoro the first mega discourse in the field of demography is *Malthusian* one. The other ones are *Demographic transition* (Bruijn, 2006), *naturalism* (Mbismakoro, 2014) and reproductive rights and health by world health organization (McIntosh and Finkle, 1995; United Nations Population Fund, 1995) is the last one. Now, it is possible to describe interdiscursivity in analyzed texts (Table 1).

Table 1. Interdiscursivity of demographic discourses in Iran

Field of Study	Interdiscursivity	
	Scientific discourse	Demographic mega- discourses in Iran
Demographers	Development, WHO	Islamic realism, Reformism
	Naturalism (sub discourse: nation as power)	Islamic idealism, Fundamentalism

As discussed, each demographic discourse is corresponded with special mega-discourse in Iranian context. Two mega-discourses of Islamic realism and reformism adopted

‘development’ and ‘WHO’ discourses while the discourse of naturalism is taken up by two other mega-discourses, i.e., ‘Islamic idealism’ and ‘fundamentalism’. In the following

section, we uncover the main discourse in the current population situation of Iran. This discourse is used by demographers to form attitudes, views, and opinions of people and policymakers. Thus, it is the main discourse of public demography.

Explanation and Discussion

For explanation, it is necessary to identify social basics or theories which play a role in producing discourse. In other words, the objective of this phase is to describe discourse as a social process (Nozari et al., 2013). In this section, the interrelationship between social structures and discourses is discussed in two levels: institutional and social processes.

Institutional processes of the main discourse of public demography

Demographic texts which were analyzed in this research concentrated on population and its transition and framed in the main discourse that is Conceptual. Iranian demographers try to convince policymakers to take breath, hesitate and do not rush to deal with the problem of fertility decline. They invite policymakers to pay attention to research data.

As discussed, this approach is named Conceptual. However, these texts are the intersection of various institutions which play a role in forming discourse. The most important institutional process is science. In other words, demographers as scientific elites try to justify their thoughts and ideas according to information, data and statistics for affecting the policymaking process. For them science is prior to making population policy.

In their view, there are many important indirect factors, such as economic, social and psychological, which determine couples' childbearing attitude and behavior. They insist on the validity of scientific knowledge and argue that Conceptual discourse is produced and reproduced in first ranked institutions and universities based on demographic concepts and accurate scientific evidence. Advocates of Conceptual discourse believe that policymakers must pay attention to demographic window of opportunity and make the youth empowered. They consider population issues as multidisciplinary and complex ones and emphasize on the quality of

the population that is in accordance with the development.

Social processes of the main discourse of public demography

The Conceptual discourse is part of a social process which approach to policy making. The Conceptual approach in one hand pays attention to the effects of decisions on the public and involves as many advocates and interested groups as possible to make better and accepted decision. Therefore, science-society relation is changed from authoritative and one-direction to interactive and two-direction one and citizens' attitude are considered as key factor for effective policymaking. On the other hand, it indicates that demographers try to affect the process of policy making and narrow research-policy gap.

Iranian demographers have played an effective role in making demographic policies based on GPP, and expect that scientific knowledge shapes the population policy. This approach to research-policy relationship presume scientists feeding into policy according to which knowledge either drives

policy, or policy problems stimulate research to provide direct solutions (Boswell and Smith, 2017). Demographers seek to convince policymakers for an evidence-based policymaking taking into account the course of demographic transition to achieve GPP's goals. This approach aims to address the gap between science and policy spheres and reduce it by communication. They translate and simplify expert knowledge and make it understandable and relevant for policymakers and increase its availability by media. In addition, they hope to enlighten the process of policymaking by knowledge distribution and gradual changes in public perceptions and thinking.

Conclusion

How researchers use, present, and represent information, scientific and political figures influence public policy, political and individual decision-making and public acceptability. Representation of demographic information in the media i.e., public demography, influences public policy and individual decision-making. It can be argued that the most important contribution of public

demography is better-informed discussions about important public policy matters that would lead to more appropriate interventions and better policies and programs. For example, a deeper understanding of population dynamics is vital for welfare policy and planning and it is provided by producing scientific accurate popular text in media. In this way, demographers create new order of demographic discourse. They use media to inform lay people and policymakers and make their scientific findings simple and understandable to change old order of demographic discourse. The main action in this process is their effort to decrease the gap between science and policy in population policies. Therefore, the media not only act for providing the evidence, but also reproduce discourses and show their order. This research indicates that Conceptual discourse aims to encourage people for increasing their fertility rate using different language. A recent study using Analytical Hierarchy Process Approach among population experts (Abbasi-Shavazi and Esmaili, no date) confirmed that targeted culture-building about childbearing by using scientific evidence and providing persuasive

content to informed and educated audiences has an effective role in changing the idea and behavior of couples towards fertility.

Iranian demographers identify a cultural gap between themselves and policymakers and try to reconcile two communities by using the media as this study has already illustrated. Conceptual discourse has its codes and rules. It uses binary code of true/false to establish scientific truth claims. Conceptual discourse invites policymakers to value the potential of young population and to satisfy economic, educational and health needs for providing favorable social and economic contexts not only for seizing the opportunity of the demographic dividend but also for a healthy ageing population in the future. This approach would increase trust and public support, change attitude and behavior towards the new policies, decrease public resistance, and more importantly increases the public acceptability of the GPP. In other words, the media that reproduce and promote the Conceptual discourse and pay attention to public demography may play a significant role for changing attitude and behavior of audiences towards childbearing. However,

media is one of the factors that affect public attitude and behavior among other social, cultural and economic factors. Therefore, it is

vital to think realistically about the media and its power in decision making and policy design.

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تحلیل نقش جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی در کاهش شکاف پژوهش - سیاست در ایران

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چکیده: گفتمان‌های جمعیت‌شناسی در رسانه‌ها یا جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی هم موجب افزایش آگاهی عمومی می‌شوند و هم بر برنامه‌ریزی‌ها و سیاست‌های جمعیتی اثر می‌گذارند. فهم وضعیت و مختصات گفتمان‌های عمومی جمعیت‌شناسی در ایران به حاکمیت و سیاست‌گذاران کمک می‌کند تا توصیه‌ها و پیشنهادات متخصصان را برای استفاده در سیاست‌گذاری کارآمد شناسایی کنند، ادراکات و فهم عموم مردم از سیاست‌های جمعیتی را درک کنند و تغییر در رفتار باروری پدید آورند. هدف این مقاله، مطالعه گفتمان‌های جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی است که پس از ابلاغ سیاست‌های کلی جمعیتی توسط مقام معظم رهبری با هدف اثرگذاری بر سیاست و تصمیم‌گیری‌های مرتبط با باروری در رسانه‌های ایرانی تولید و بازتولید شده‌اند. این مقاله با استفاده از تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی گفتمان‌های جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی را که در فاصله زمانی اول فروردین ۱۳۸۹ تا اول خرداد ۱۳۹۵ در وبسایت‌های دو روزنامه کیهان و ایران، و نظرات متخصصان جمعیت‌شناسی که به صورت برخط منتشر شده‌اند در را تحلیل می‌کند. تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی نشان می‌دهد که گفتمان اصلی در جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی «مفهومی» است. تحلیل متون نشان می‌دهد که جمعیت‌شناسان تلاش کرده‌اند تا با ساده‌سازی و قابل فهم ساختن مباحث جمعیت‌شناسی و انتشار آنها در رسانه‌ها، شکاف علم-سیاست را کاهش دهند. آنان می‌گویند که مسائل و مشکلات جمعیتی، موضوعات تخصصی هستند و به پژوهش دقیق و علمی نیاز دارند. بنابراین، گام نخست برای سیاست‌گذاری و برنامه‌ریزی، شناخت و فهم وضعیت جمعیتی در ایران است. جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی قصد دارد تا با تدوین سیاست‌گذاری مبتنی بر شواهد، دستیابی به اهداف سیاست‌های کلی جمعیتی را تسهیل نماید. آنها به سیاست‌گذاران پیشنهاد می‌کنند تا بافتار اجتماعی و اقتصادی حامی ایجاد خانواده و فرزندآوری را فراهم آورند تا رشد جمعیتی پایدار مطرح در سیاست‌های کلی جمعیتی تحقق یابد. جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی نقش حیاتی در ایجاد درک عمیق از روندها و سیاست‌های جمعیتی در آینده دارد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: جمعیت‌شناسی عمومی، گفتمان جمعیتی، تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی، سیاست‌های کلی جمعیتی، ایران.