



Effectiveness of parental Religiosity On Their Attitude Towards Childbearing

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ABSTRACT

Target The present study has been conducted to understand the effects of parental religiosity on their attitude towards childbearing. The research method is based on a survey with a Likert scale questionnaire. The statistical community consists of 383 married couples living in Sari, Iran, selected by Morgan's table, with an increase in the number of samples to 460 couples. Sampling method is based on simple randomization.

Findings confirm a relationship between parental religiosity and their attitude towards childbearing as follows. A relationship exists between parental religiosity factors of commitment and fulfillment of religious duties and attitude towards childbearing, whereas a relationship between parental religiosity factor of religious emotions and attitude towards childbearing was not established. In addition, a relationship was observed between parental religiosity and the number of children.

Conclusion Thus, the issue of religiosity is one of the factors that is able to have positive role in parental attitude towards childbearing. Therefore, it is necessary to address the issue.

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Introduction

The size of a country's population is one of the important and effective components in its military, economic, and cultural power. Over the past few decades, we have witnessed a significant reduction in the population in our country, Iran, and if this trend continues, we will have a country in the future with a population structure that is shaped by middle-aged and elderly people, which would face numerous challenges in economic, military, security, cultural, and educational fronts.

Marriage and having a family provides the context for childbearing and when practiced on the community level can lead to an increase in the size of the population and the country's manpower. Children are an inseparable part of the family and give meaning to it, but along with the changes in the lifestyles of people in the society, the nature of the family has changed over the past decades and the importance of having children and the birth rate have been affected due to lowered marriage rate.

One of the effective means in the birth rate is the issue of people's attitude toward childbearing. Attitude is "a relatively fixed way of thinking, feeling and behaving towards individuals, groups and social issues. The components of attitude are known as thoughts, beliefs, feelings or emotions, and behavioral tendencies that have cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions. Emotional components refer to negative or positive emotions and behavioral components specifically refer to individual actions and cognitive components to specific thoughts and interpretations" (Salarifar et al., 2017: 110).

When the attitude of families towards childbearing is negative, it is very clear to see a decrease in childbearing in the society. Therefore, whenever an individual or members of a society are to be persuaded towards a subject, it is essential to influence their attitude towards that subject. For such persuasion effort to be effective, issues that relate to both the cognitive aspects and the emotional dimension of the target group need to be addressed in order to influence their decisions and behavior. If men and women in a society are influenced by the prevailing culture - whether it is religion, creed, or anything else – to regard having a child as a means to increase wealth, or as a blessing, or contributing to the strength of their country, or any other motive, they may be persuaded towards having children.

In the past, children were considered as a blessing of life, and a main concern of women was having children. However, children may be considered by some people as a source of trouble today, a nuisance, or an obstacle to their progress in the society, and a negative attitude towards having children and the desire to have more children has become widespread among both men and women (See: Mousavi and Ghafeleh Bashi, 2013: 125).

Excessive and extreme participation of women in the society and the business market has reduced the birth rate and consequently, further advancing the existing negative attitude towards childbearing. According to the results reported recently, the attitude towards childbearing has a significant effect on women's agency in that many women consider childbearing as an obstacle to their agency (See: Safarian and Moradi, 2019: 182).

It seems that religion is one of the factors that can affect the attitude of people towards childbearing, because religion shapes human beliefs, actions and feelings. Religion literally means ruling, dignity, worship, habit, reckoning, obedience, and so on (See: Farahidi, 1409 AD, vol. 8:73; Johari, 1376 AD, vol. 5: 2118; Ragheb Isfahani, 1412 AD: 323) and in terminology refers to a set of beliefs, ethics, laws and regulations that are provided for management of the individual's lifestyle and thereby cultivating the progress of the human society through revelation and intellect (Javadi Amoli, 2009: 19).

Religion can influence people's attitudes and tendencies and move their feelings and actions in a certain direction according to its teachings. When sayings of the Holy Quran or narrations from Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) or the Imams refer to a divine order about a subject, they will be effective for those who believe in the faith of Islam.

Max Weber defines religion as a belief system that shapes forces. He believes that religion is an independent variable affecting social affairs of the individual (Kalantari et al., 2010: 86).

Golds Chider considers the correlation between religious affiliation and childbearing important and by using the term special theology, argues that the different birth rates of different religious groups implies that their religious teachings are different (Piltan and Rahmanian, 2015: 126).

Certainly, the type of insight, orientation, religion, as well as the level of person's beliefs affect all his/her behavior, including childbearing.

Hart emphasizes the role of religion in the worldview of individuals. According to him, there is no future for someone without religious beliefs, and therefore there is no good reason for that person to bear a child. Hope for the future gives meaning to our lives, and when there is no hope, many concepts of the family are weakened, individualism and egoism are highlighted and in these circumstances, the birth rate decreases (Modiri and Razeghi Nasrabad, 2015: 135).

According to existing research, women who describe religion as "very important" tend to have more children than those who find religion "somewhat important" or "not important" (Hayford and Philip Morgan, 2008: 1177).

There is a high correlation between religious beliefs and tendency to bear children, and religious beliefs are among the most important factors in women's childbearing decision (See: Rad and savabi, 2015: 144).

In Islam, there is an emphasis on childbearing and reproduction. If a person wants to have children within the legal limits, he/she needs to get married, because marriage is the prelude to having children.

Humans respond to their emotional, sexual, and reproductive needs through marriage. According to the Holy Quran, God Almighty created pairs of everything (Quran: Zariyat/49) and formed the nature of human existence in such a way that it reaches perfection and peace through marriage (Quran: Rome/21). In other parts of the Holy Quran, God Almighty decrees if you are poor and needy, I, shall make you needless by My grace. (Quran: Noor/32). The Messenger of God, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) suggested in a narration (hadith) to people to seek alimant in marriage (Tabarsi, 1412 AD, p. 196). In Islamic traditions, it is commanded to marry women with ability to give birth to a child. The importance of childbearing has been mentioned in various contexts, such as a narration attributed to the Holy Prophet suggesting to marry a virgin and prolific woman and do not marry a woman who is beautiful but barren (Koleini, 1407 AD, J 5: 333; Ibn Baboyah, 1413 AD, J 3: 392).

There are many hadiths that consider childbearing and reproduction of the Muslim generation as a source of pride and honor for the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

The importance of childbearing and reproduction is easily understood from these hadiths (See: Koleini, 1407 AD, vol. 6: 2; Ibn Hayyun, 1385 AD, vol. 2: 574).

According to Islamic teachings, the aliment of children is in the hands of God, and killing a fetus for fear of poverty is a great sin. God Almighty has given priority to the children over the parents (Quran: Isra/31). This means that the existence of a child itself is a blessing and mercy of life and provides aliment to the parents.

According to other research results, there is a positive relationship between religiosity and marital child bearing among Muslims (See: Schellekens and Atrash, 2018: 911).

Various European survey data also show that a larger percentage of Muslim women are married and more committed to traditional family values than other women. Muslim women are generally more religious than non-Muslim women, and religiosity is directly related to childbearing. Among Muslim women, religiosity and commitment to family values are equally important for childbearing, while for non-Muslim women, religion is a less important factor in the decision to bear a child (See: Westoff and Frejka, 2007: 785).

Given all the mentioned relevant results and observations, it should be noted that if in a society religion is placed out of the realm of everyday life and confined to a purely secular stance, the accumulation of wealth and constantly worrying about one's financials in the future may take the center stage, leading to a diminished role for religion to positively influence people's mind about childbearing. Therefore, in order to strengthen the role that a religious culture can play in the issue of childbearing, it is necessary to first place religion in the context of people's lives and lessen the influences of secularization, and additionally, save the lifestyle of people from extravagance and waste, facilitate the employment process and income of the people. It is then that the religious culture can naturally place its motivation towards bearing children in the context of people's lives. In this way, when families in a Muslim society become aware that Islam encourages childbearing, they will have a positive attitude toward childbearing.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between parents' religiosity and their attitudes toward childbearing and in particular, aims to answer the following questions:

1. What effect does the level of religiosity of parents have on their attitude towards childbearing?
2. What effect does the level of parental religiosity have on the number of parents' children?

Searching the available scientific sources, including databases and reputable publications in the country of Iran, no particular studies were found on the subject of the current study based on the approach of using the Quran and Hadith to underpin the importance of religion's stance on the topic. Hence, we refer to some studies that have been conducted on the various related aspects of this subject.

Saei Gharenaz et al. (2017), in their study concluded that religious orientation is an influential factor on the desired and feasible number of children by employed women.

Soroush and Bahrani (2013) suggested that there is a significant consensus among married women about the ideal number of children and this had nothing to do with their level of religiosity, as religiosity played a minor role in determining the number of children. This was while the attitude towards the role of maps genders has a significant relationship with the ideal number of children, which remains significant even when contextual variables are changed.

Foroutan and Rezaei Pasha (2018), in a study on the effects of religious identity on childbearing tendencies in rural and urban areas of Iran concluded that childbearing tendencies are significantly affected by the level of religiosity.

Modiri and Razeghi Nasrabad (2015) concluded in their study that childbearing is influenced by religiosity and this effect is still present in the presence of economic and social variables.

Abbaszadeh et al. (2019) compared the role of being religious and family-oriented with the influences of new media and modern thinking in the attitude

towards childbearing, and suggested that all these are effective factors in the attitude towards childbearing.

Modiri (2017) concluded that the desired number of children in both men and women is influenced by religiosity and gender-based attitudes, and found that religiosity affects the intended number of children more than gender-based attitudes.

The current study aims to address the need to clarify what kind of an effect the level of parental religiosity may have on their attitude towards childbearing. We hypothesize that the more religious an individual is, the more positive his/her attitude towards childbearing and having more children will be.

Methods

In this research, a survey method with a Likert scale questionnaire was used. An "Attitude Toward Childbearing" questionnaire was developed and its face validity was determined by experts and university professors. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha test and a value of 64% was obtained. For religiosity, the questionnaire of "Religious Attitude and Religiosity" by Khodayari Fard et al. (2009) was used. The statistical population of this study was married people in the city of Sari, Iran. According to the latest population and housing census of the Statistics Center of Iran, the number of households in Sari is 140,492, and the Morgan table was used to determine the required number of samples, which was 383 participants based on an error level of 5%.

As having to answer questions about family issues may avert some participants, the sample size was increased to 460 as a remedy for exiting participants. For sampling in this research, a simple random sampling method was used. Selection of the participants was based on sampling from the three parts of the town which represent different economic levels. The respondents were asked to state the locality of their home in one of the three region of uptown, midtown and downtown. The SPSS software version 24 was used to describe the data and the Spearman correlation was used to analyze the data.

Results

According to Table 1, the respondents' attitude toward childbearing are 26% negative or very negative, 43% moderate, and 31% positive or very positive.

According to Table 2, the respondents' religiosity is 23% low or very low, 31% moderate, and 46% high or very high.

According to Table 3, the respondents' religiosity (religious belief) is 14% low or very low, 19% moderate, and 66% high or very high.

According to Table 4, the respondents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) is 22% low, 29% moderate, and 49% high or very high.

According to Table 5, the respondents' religiosity (religious emotions) is 20% low or very low, 24% moderate, and 56% high or very high.

According to Table 6, the number of respondents' children are: 6% have no children, 29% have one child, 52% have two children, 11% have three children, 2% have four children, and 0.2% have five or six children.

Table 1- Respondents' attitude

Attitude toward childbearing

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	Percentage	Number		
6.6	6.6	5.1	23	Very negative	Value
26.2	19.6	15.0	68	Negative	
69.2	42.9	32.8	149	Moderate	
94.5	25.4	19.4	88	Positive	
100.0	5.5	4.2	19	Very positive	
	100.0	76.4	347	Total	
		23.6	107	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 2- Respondents' religiosity

Religiosity

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
9.7	9.7	8.8	40	Very low	Value
23.4	13.8	12.6	57	Low	
54.3	30.9	28.2	128	Moderate	
85.0	30.7	28.0	127	High	
100.0	15.0	13.7	62	Very high	
	100.0	91.2	414	Total	
		8.8	40	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 3- Respondents' religiosity (religious belief)

Religiosity (religious belief)

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
6.6	6.6	6.4	29	Very low	Value
14.4	7.7	7.5	34	Low	
33.7	19.4	18.7	85	Moderate	
53.8	20.0	19.4	88	High	
100.0	46.2	44.7	203	Very high	
	100.0	96.7	439	Total	
		3.3	15	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 4- Respondents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)

Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
21.5	21.5	20.3	92	Low	Value
50.8	29.3	27.5	125	Moderate	
84.3	33.5	31.5	143	High	
100.0	15.7	14.8	67	Very high	
	100.0	94.1	427	Total	
		5.9	27	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 5- Respondents' religiosity (religious emotions)

Religiosity (religious emotions)

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
8.6	8.6	8.4	38	Very low	Value
19.7	11.1	10.8	49	Low	
43.8	24.0	23.3	106	Moderate	
72.3	28.6	27.8	126	High	
100.0	27.7	26.9	122	Very high	
	100.0	97.1	441	Total	
		2.9	13	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 6 - The number of respondents' children*Number of child*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
5.9	5.9	5.5	25	0	Value
35.3	29.4	27.5	125	1	
87.1	51.8	48.5	220	2	
97.6	10.6	9.9	45	3	
99.5	1.9	1.8	8	4	
99.8	.2	.2	1	5	
100.0	.2	.2	1	6	
	100.0	93.6	425	Total	
		6.4	29	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 7 shows that the higher the level of a respondent's religiosity is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and that people with lower levels of religiosity have a more negative attitude towards childbearing.

The results obtained based on the Spearman correlation test in Table 8 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to $p = 0.240$, which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to $p = 0.000$. As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between parents' religiosity and their attitude toward childbearing.

Table 7: The relationship between parents' religiosity and attitude toward childbearing

*Religiosity * attitudes toward childbearing*

Attitude toward childbearing

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity	Very low	15.2%	18.2%	45.5%	21.2%		100.0%
	Low	5.9%	25.5%	56.9%	9.8%	2.0%	100.0%
	Moderate	6.4%	22.3%	44.7%	24.5%	2.1%	100.0%
	High	5.5%	14.3%	37.4%	33.0%	9.9%	100.0%
	Very high	6.4%	14.9%	31.9%	31.9%	14.9%	100.0%
Total		7.0%	19.0%	42.7%	25.3%	6.0%	100.0%

Table 8: Spearman correlation test of parental religiosity with attitude toward childbearing

Inferential table

Religiosity	Attitude toward childbearing			
.240**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitude toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
318	349	Number		
1.000	.240***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity	
.	.000	Significance level		
414	318	Number		

According to Table 9, the higher the level of religiosity (religious belief) of a respondent is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and people with lower levels of religiosity (religious belief) have a more negative attitude towards childbearing. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 10 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to $p = 0.245$, which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to $p = 0.000$. As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between the degree of religiosity (religious belief) of parents and their attitude towards childbearing.

Table 9: The relationship between religiosity (religious belief) and attitude toward childbearing*Religiosity (religious belief) * attitude toward childbearing**Attitude toward childbearing*

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity (religious belief)	Very low	26.1%	13.0%	39.1%	21.7%		100.0%
	Low	6.9%	37.9%	41.4%	13.8%		100.0%
	Moderate	3.1%	24.6%	53.8%	15.4%	3.1%	100.0%
	High	4.5%	17.9%	49.3%	25.4%	3.0%	100.0%
	Very high	5.9%	14.5%	36.8%	32.9%	9.9%	100.0%
Total		6.5%	19.0%	43.2%	25.6%	5.7%	100.0%

Table 10: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (religious belief) with attitude toward childbearing*Inferential table*

Religiosity (religious belief)	Attitude toward childbearing			
.245**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
338	349	Number		
1.000	.245***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (religious belief)	
.	.000	Significance level		
439	338	Number		

Table 11 shows that the higher the level of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) of a respondent is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and that people with lower levels of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) have a more negative attitude towards childbearing. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 12 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is

equal to $p = 0.249$, which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to $p = 0.000$. As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between the degree of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) of parents and their attitude towards childbearing.

Table 11: The relationship between religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) with attitude toward childbearing

Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) attitude toward childbearing*

Attitude toward childbearing

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
(commitment and performing religious duties)	Low	9.0%	21.8%	44.9%	23.1%	1.3%	100.0%
	Moderate	7.9%	27.7%	50.5%	10.9%	3.0%	100.0%
	High	4.0%	15.8%	37.6%	34.7%	7.9%	100.0%
	Very high	8.9%	11.1%	31.1%	37.8%	11.1%	100.0%
Total		7.1%	20.3%	42.5%	24.9%	5.2%	100.0%

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Table 12: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) with attitude toward childbearing

Inferential table

Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)	Attitude toward childbearing

and performing religious duties)				
.249**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
335	349	Number		
1.000	.249***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)	
.	.000	Significance level		
435	335	Number		

According to Table 13, there is no relationship between the level of parents' religiosity (religious emotions) and their attitude toward childbearing. This is based on the results obtained from the Spearman correlation test presented in Table 14, which show that the correlation coefficient between the two mentioned variables is equal to $p = 0.067$, a low positive value with the validity level of $p = 0.222$. As the value of the validity level is greater than 0.05, then it can be concluded that the main hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

Table 13: The relationship between religiosity (religious emotions) and attitude toward childbearing

*Religiosity (religious emotions) * attitude toward childbearing*

Attitude toward childbearing

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity (religious emotions)	Very low	9.1%	12.1%	60.6%	15.2%	3.0%	100.0%
	Low	10.5%	18.4%	47.4%	21.1%	2.6%	100.0%
	Moderate	5.0%	20.0%	45.0%	26.3%	3.8%	100.0%
	High	4.4%	20.0%	41.1%	32.2%	2.2%	100.0%
	Very high	8.4%	21.1%	35.8%	22.1%	12.6%	100.0%
Total		6.8%	19.3%	43.2%	25.0%	5.7%	100.0%

Table 14: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (religious emotions) with attitude toward childbearing

Inferential table

Religiosity (religious emotions)	Attitudes toward childbearing			
.067	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.222	.	Significance level		
338	349	Number		
1.000	.067	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (religious emotions)	
.	.222	Significance level		
441	338	Number		

According to Table 15, The higher the level of a respondent's religiosity is, the more children they may have, and people with a lower level of religiosity have fewer children. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 16 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to $p = 0.175$, which is a low positive value with the validity level of $p = 0.001$. As the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between the level of parents' religiosity and the number of their children.

Table 15: The relationship between the level of religiosity and number of children

*The level of religiosity * number of children*

number of children

		0	1	2	3	4 and more	Total
The level of religiosity	Very low	2.9%	48.6%	40.0%	5.7%	2.9%	100.0%
	Low	7.4%	25.9%	61.1%	5.6%		100.0%
	Moderate	7.6%	31.1%	51.3%	8.4%	1.7%	100.0%
	High	1.7%	20.7%	62.8%	14.0%	0.8%	100.0%
	Very high	8.5%	25.4%	35.6%	20.3%	10.2%	100.0%
Total		5.4%	27.8%	52.8%	11.3%	2.6%	100.0%

Table 16: Spearman correlation test of religiosity and number of children
Inferential table

The level of religiosity	Number of children			
.175**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Number of children	Spearman test
.001	.	Significance level		
388	425	Number		
1.000	.175**	Correlation intensity	The level of religiosity	
.	.001	Significance level		
414	388	Number		

Conclusion

The present study showed that the level of parents' religiosity is effective on their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious the parents are, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing is. Therefore, experts who are concerned about the issue of population and childbearing can work more on enhancing the religiosity of parents and emphasize Islamic teachings about childbearing in order to promote an increase in the population of the country.

The level of parents' religiosity (religious belief) affects their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious (religious beliefs) the parents are, the more positive their attitude will be towards childbearing, and

on the other hand, the less religious (religious beliefs) the parents are, the more negative their attitude will be towards childbearing.

The level of parents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) affects their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious (commitment and performing religious duties) the parents are, the more positive their attitude will be towards childbearing; and the less religious (commitment and performing religious duties) the parents are, the more negative their attitude will be towards childbearing.

There is no relationship between the level of parents' religiosity (religious emotions) and their attitude towards childbearing.

There is a relationship between parents' religiosity and the number of their children. This means that parents with higher levels of religiosity have more children and people with lower levels of religiosity have fewer children.

Overall, this study showed that parents' attitude toward childbearing are 26% negative or very negative, 43% moderate, and 31% positive or very positive. However, these statistics should not be generalized as the population sample of this research was only limited to married people in the city of Sari, Iran. On the other hand, as the benefits of population reduction and having fewer children in a family are constantly promoted by the western media, such propaganda has had a negative effect on parents' perspective in a way that while having a child was in the past regarded as a blessing, and source of provision, mercy and peace, the perspective of some parents today is laden with negative attributes towards having children such as considering children as a burden or obstacle to the parents' progress.

One of the factors that can play a positive role in influencing the attitude of parents towards childbearing is the issue of religiosity which promotes an increase in the population of the country, and deserves a more thorough consideration as an effective strategy. It is suggested that a similar research be conducted at the national level in order to derive more general results.

Limitations of the current research included low cooperation of some of the participants in completing the questionnaire and time consuming, costly preparation of the questionnaire and its distribution in the city are among the limitations of this research

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