Childbearing Challenges in Educated Women with Three or More Children and Motivational Strategies

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

ABSTRACT

Population and its changes have long been one of the most vital issues of a country. According to the latest data from the Statistics Center, the fertility rate has reached 1.7, which means less than the replacement level, which shows that we are facing the challenge of population decline. Changes in women's lifestyles and attitudes are one of the most critical factors affecting the issue of fertility. This study investigated the challenges of childbearing in women with three children. This study aimed to find the motivating factors for childbearing. The research was qualitative and phenomenological. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 mothers aged 26-42 years who had three or more children and were selected by the snowball sampling method. According to the analysis of the findings, three main categories, namely barriers to childbearing, motivating factors for childbearing, and expectations to facilitate childbearing, and 10 sub-categories and more than 100 concepts, were obtained The findings indicated that people tend to have lots of children in accordance with their religious beliefs, and in this regard, the financial and emotional support obtained from both families may be an important element. In addition, the husband's assistance with domestic tasks and child care was a crucial and effective factor for the mother.

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Introduction

Population and its growth are one of the great national challenges these days. The issue of fertility and population is very important. Nobody can deny the significance of the country's young population. In recent years, one of the significant challenges the country is facing is the decline in population growth. According to the most recent data from the Iranian Statistics Center, the population's total fertility rate in 2016 and 2017 was calculated to be 1.2% and .2%, respectively. (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2019). Changes in the fertility rate and its downward slope are evident at first glance. In recent years, fertility has fallen below the replacement level, indicating a population crisis, with a rate of approximately 1.8%. (Basten et al., 2014).This decline in fertility rates has begun in recent years. A bbasiShavazi (2001), examining the trend and age pattern of fertility in the provinces of the country in 1972 and 1996, came to the conclusion that since the second half of 1981, the fertility rate has been declining, and its speed has increased since the end of 1980s. This decline occurred several years before the change in government policies on family planning and was probably due to implicit government policies, such as increasing literacy, rural development, and expanding health in the country. According to statistics, the birth rate in 2015 was 1,570,000, which decreased to 1,196,000 in 2018.

According to statistics, the youth rate of the whole population shows that the youth population is declining; the proportion of the population under 15 years old in 1956 was 42.2%, and this rate in 2016 reached only 24% (Fathi et al., 2019). Using demographic indicators and statistics, it is expected that an explosion of aging will occur in the country around 2031, and this crisis will have adverse economic consequences, which can be attributed to a lack of economic growth and development. Reduced labor force, reduction of the country's young and elite population, increased maintenance costs for the elderly, and pressure on pension funds (Barzegari & Moghli, 2020).

All of this indicates the need for extensive research on this issue. Numerous researchers in recent years have studied the issue of fertility from a variety of approaches. In research on factors affecting fertility, several factors, including social, economic, sociological, and health factors, have been studied: In the health approach, infertility and its treatment, increased fertility age, and the

risks related to pregnancy in old age were examined (Behjati & Ardakani, 2007). In the sociological approach, modernization is viewed as the primary cause of a decline in fertility. It is analyzed that people have to adapt to the structural changes that come with modernization. In this process of urbanization and change of values, women control and reduce their fertility to improve their position and status in society and achieve equality with men (Shojaei, et al., 2019).

Also, from another viewpoint, after the Islamic Revolution, change and transformations have been influenced by both external and internal factors. On the one hand, the values resulting from the relationship with the West, and on the other hand, indigenous and cultural value systems have influenced individual values. Changing attitudes toward childbearing can also be analyzed as a function of these two factors: Today, the use of the internet and social media has made it easier for people to learn about the lifestyles of people around the world, modernity affects them, and individualism is increasing. Influenced by these changes, women also adopted person-centered values such as self-realization, body management, education, and intolerance of childbearing problems and difficulties. For women, the value of having children is lower than employment and education. It can be said that generations before the revolution were more influenced by religiosity in the field of childbearing, and the current generations, including women, are more influenced by modernity (Ojaghloo & Sarai, 2014).

In demographic approaches, more attention is paid to components such as health status and reduction of child mortality, increase in women's education, increase in age of marriage, use of contraceptives, migration, infertility, abortion, and experience in reducing fertility. In the economic approach, opportunity cost plays a significant role in fertility decisions and having a small family; In other words, childbearing is a kind of rational behavior in which people prefer to have fewer children due to economic conditions and the costs of childbearing and parenting (Shojaei, 2017). In light of this, it can also be said that the growing costs of having a child reduce the willingness to procreate. Concern for the future of children and fear of the economic problems of having a child is known as one of the essential obstacles to childbearing (Tavousi et al., 2016). Working women also face more

challenges in having children. Their labor rules are not flexible and make it difficult for them to have children. They face challenges such as childcare, work environment tensions, sometimes a lack of social support from family members, and sometimes even a lack of support from the head of the household, which causes couples to delay childbearing, reduce the number of children, and the age gap between children (Eshaghi et al. 2014).

According to research with different approaches, it can be concluded that women and the changes that have been made in their lifestyles and attitudes have played a pivotal role in reducing fertility, and the importance of addressing the role of women in this field is more than it has been already revealed. Therefore, this study has addressed this issue from a women's studies approach. The general purpose of this study is to determine the factors affecting childbearing from a woman's perspective. Considering that in most studies, women without children and with a maximum of two children have been studied, women with three children and more were selected as the statistical population; Women who, despite numerous environmental, cultural, and economic influences, have more children and tend to have more children in future, so that perhaps encouraging strategies for childbearing can be achieved. Other objectives of this study include identifying the challenges of having three or more children for families, especially their mothers, factors affecting the desire of mothers to have many children, and the demands of mothers in dealing with these challenges.

Background

Fertility decline is a challenge that has plagued many countries and has prompted researchers worldwide to investigate it. Among the foreign articles, Gunnar Anderson (2020), in his review article "*A Review of fertility Policies and Methods in Sweden*", examines Sweden's higher fertility rate compared to European countries in a similar welfare situation. Family policies in Sweden are not directly aimed at encouraging childbirth; Rather, their main goal is to support women's participation in the workforce and promote gender equality. These policies aim to strengthen women's dependence on the labor market and encourage gender equality, which has made it easier for women to integrate work and family life, and in such conditions, the fertility rate remains relatively high. Sikorska (2020), in his research, "*Is it possible to increase the*

fertility rate in Poland?" does not consider it possible to increase the fertility rate because various factors, including the pressure of costs on the mother, threaten the security of this increase. These include greater global access to childcare facilities for children under the age of three, increased access to kindergartens, support for flexible forms of employment, facilitating affordable housing for young people, government funding for infertility treatment (IVF), and measures to protect women's fertility rights.

In another study on fathers' participation in the family, fertility, and maternal employment: evidence from Central and Eastern Europe, researchers sought to answer whether increasing father participation in the family (housework and childcare) can increase fertility. The analysis of the results shows that when fathers are involved in household chores, women are more likely to have a second child as well as a full-time job. Policies that encourage a symmetrical division of labor between couples may also contribute to fertility rates and lead to a gender balance that helps mothers pursue both work and childbearing (Esther & Profeta, 2020). Assuming that non-parental care of children can be a significant factor in affecting decisions related to pregnancy, Wang and Zhao (2021) conducted research on grandparents' care of the first child and second birth in China: Results from a dynamic model and empirical investigation. The Dynamic General Equilibrium (DGE) model has theoretically proven the positive impact of grandparental care on the number of children. In another study on more than 4,700 working women of childbearing age, the results showed that the care of grandparents had a positive effect on the fertility of working women (Hejun Gu et al., 2021).

Many national studies have been conducted due to the significance of population and childbirth. Some of them were considered according to the subject of the research. Chamani et al. (2016) sought to identify the factors affecting low childbearing in Iranian society and found that one of the factors affecting the decrease in childbearing is the fading of traditional female identity, which has led to women rethinking their identities and developing a more negative attitude towards children. Using an economical approach to childbearing, Abdullahi and Farjadi (2015), in a qualitative study employing an economical approach to childbearing, identified categories such as men's procrastination in making decisions due to economic issues and the reduction

of employment opportunities, which indicated a sense of economic insecurity in the society. Also, in the current situation in Tehran, due to social rationality, childbearing seems costly and useless. In this study, by emphasizing quality over quantity, men and women consider having a few children a rational action. Modiri (2017) examines the effect of religiosity and gender attitudes on the intention to have children. The results show a significant relationship between religiosity and gender attitudes with the number of intended children. This relationship is stronger in women than menThe effect of religiosity on the number of children has the greatest influence in this study. Rad and Thawabi's (2015) research also mentioned religious beliefs as the most important factor in fertility tendencies. Rezvani Dioklai et al. (2020) examined the relationship between the Islamic lifestyle and childbearing. They found that people with religious beliefs had more children than others because their beliefs provided them with a sense of comfort, power, and hope for the future, resulting in a positive attitude toward childbearing. Rafiei Moghadam and Ashtiani (2020), in a systematic review, examined 231 articles on childbearing that were published from 2008 to 2018. it was found that the socio-economic middle class has a greater tendency to have children and that the lifestyle and its value frameworks are essential factor in the tendency to have children.

Razeghi Nasrabad et al. (2021) investigated the effect of attitudes and gender-based division of labor on the interval between the first and second births in Tehran. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between gender attitudes and the interval between the first birth to the second birth, and overall findings were consistent with the theory of gender equality. By examining the research backgrounds, it can be said that The bulk of qualitative and quantitative studies have focused on cultural, economic, social, and ethnic aspects, among other things, that have an impact on childbearing and have researched families with a small number of children. According to the background of the research, it can be said that most of the research articles on childbearing and women have looked at the issue from the perspective of explaining the decline in the number of and have sought the reasons for this issue and less research has been done on families with many children. Also, there is no research focusing on student mothers and educated women with many children. Therefore, in this study, an attempt was made to address this statistical population.

Theoretical considerations

Common theories about the issue of fertility can be categorized into three groups based on changes in values, rational, structural, and economical choice. In the first category, we can mention Inglehart's theory of value transformation. He believes that in advanced industrial societies, with the increase in the level of economic and physical security, material values have shifted towards metamaterial values. Because the newer generations are more materialistic and pay more attention to freedom, self-expression, and quality of life, they marry less, and because they have transcendental priorities, they are less interested in having children, and as a result, their fertility rate decreases (Inglehart et al., 2017). Knock (1987) also analyzes the decline in childbearing as women's traditional role change; The parenting pattern has changed, and the upbringing of the child has taken on a consumption aspect, which causes a lower birth rate.

In the lives of non-traditional women who came of age during the height of the feminist movement, children are separated from their lives and identities: instead of focusing on motherhood, they adapt childbearing and parenting to the rest of their lives. It is evident that women's lives have undergone significant changes in various ways and that this is affecting family and fertility issues (Nock, 1987). In the Theory of Gender Equality, McDonald explains that the cause of low fertility in developed countries is an imbalance between institutional gender equality such as education and the job market, and low levels of gender equality in family life; In other words, when women see lower gender equality in the family and family-related institutions, such as childcare services and women's employment conditions, they switch to working outside the home and child-rearing and working outside the home, which causes a decrease in women's inclinations. (Dorahaki, 2020; Ghodrati, 2013).

One of the theories based on rational and structural choice is Ajzen's theory of planned behavior. Another theory is the perceived social support developed by Cobb (1976), according to which it may be said that a pregnant woman who is cared for and supported by family and friends after giving birth will be more inclined to have children (Nasiri & Abdolmaleki, 2015; Tamnaeifar et al., 2013). Numerous economic theories about fertility have been proposed;

Becker, one of the pioneering theorists in this field, investigated childbearing in the context of consumption and linked the demand for childbearing to the quantitative and qualitative considerations of parents. Ermisch argues that the demand and timing of childbearing depend directly on the women's cost opportunity of women, which in turn is affected by the cost and availability of formal and informal childcare facilities (Aassve et al., 2006). Leibenstein also considers the child to be an accrual commodity in the sense that the child's expenses are an obligation that the parents undertake, and it is not a transient feeling. In his view, the child is a commodity with an upward trend up to a certain level of ultimate utility and then a downward trend after that level; hence, there is a negative relationship between income and fertility (Mehrbani, 2014).

Methods

According to the research topic, qualitative methodology and phenomenological analysis were used. For this purpose, women with three or more children in Tehran were selected by a purposive snowball or chain sampling method and were subjected to semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and its travel restrictions, face-to-face interviews with observers were not possible, and a telephone interview was used instead. Given that the disease had also imposed restrictions on women, they were unable to schedule interviews during the day, and they preferred to use messengers instead of telephone interviews. In this way, the questions were sent to them through messengers on social platforms, and they answered the questions by sending a voice at any time of the day or night. According to the answers, additional questions were asked, and the work continued in the same manner. Moustakas's (1994) method was used to analyze the data. In this way, the first stage involved reading the text numerous times and grasping the wholeness of the data., as phenomenology is inherently holistic (Parvari, 2019). In the next step, the data were combined and horizontalized; In other words, all significant statements related to the topic were listed with equal value. The third step is the formation of semantic clusters, in which the researcher categorizes important statements into semantic themes or units and eliminates duplicates. In the last stage, the themes were described, such that, based on to the preceding three stages, a

description of how the phenomenon is experienced by the participants was provided (Creswell, 2018; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). To validate the data, the process of member check was used, so that for data analysis and its interpretations, the explicit text of the interviews with the participants was given in the relevant sections and was referred to it. To protect the privacy of the participants in the present study, they were informed at the beginning of the interview process of the interviewer's name, the university where they studied, the purpose of the study, and that their consent was required for participation.

Finding

T The ages of the mothers ranged from 23 to 46 years, with a mean age of 39.11 years 68.7% of mothers were housewives and 30.3% worked in the private and public sectors. 42.65% of the mothers had a high school diploma, 39.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 18.15% had a master's degree. In Table 1, the descriptive indices and correlation matrix of the research variables are presented.

Table 1. The demographic information

	Age	Education level	Field of Study	University	Spouse's Education	Number of children	Desired number of children
1	42	MA	Hadith Studies, Narrative Interpretation	Quran & Hadith University, Rey City	MA	3	5 or 6
2	26	BA	Industrial Engineering	Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch	Accepting a doctorate	3-fourth child has not yet been born	4
3	38	MA	Sociology	University of Tehran	MA	3	7
4	37	BA	General Chemistry		BA	4	The number is not known. Preference to

							have more children
5	35	MA	Computer Engineering	Shahid Beheshti University	MA	3	4 or 5
6	38	MA	Computer Science	Sharif University of Technology	MA	4	6
7	32	General Practitioner		Mashhad University of Medical Sciences	MA	3	4 or 5
8	34	MA	Women Studies	Alzahra university	MA	4	6
9	28	BA	Aerospace Engineering	Sharif University of Technology	MA	3	4
10	37	MA	Education Management	Imam Sadegh University	BA	3	4
11	32	MA	Industrial Engineering	Malek Ashtar University of Technology	PhD	3	The number of children has not been determined
12	34	seminarian-Level-three		Tehran University of	Advanced seminarian	3	4
13	35	MA	Educational Psychology	Tehran University of	BA	4	4
14	35	BA	Urban development studies		MA	4	5
15	32	seminarian-Level-two		Tehran University of	MA	3- the fourth child has not yet been born	6
16	32.5	BA	Computer Engineeri	Tehran University of	BA	4	2

			ng, Software				
17	38	BA	Economics	Allameh Tabataba'i University	PhD	4	6
18	36	MA	Math	Amirkabir University Of Technology	Diploma	4	6
19	33	Ph.D. student	Plant technology		MA	4	4
20	33	Seminarian-Level-three			Beginner seminarian	3	5 or 6

According to Table 1, the analysis of the contextual variables of the interviewees shows the statistical population has an average age of 34 years, with an average age of 34 years. Most of them had a MA degree with a frequency of 45%. According to the latest degree, they had studied more in engineering sciences. Most of their husbands also had higher education and held master's or doctoral degrees, with a frequency of 65%. None of the participants was employed at the time of the study, and only three of them had short employment experience. The variance of the residence location of the interviewees was high, but it can be said that most of them lived in the eastern part of Tehran, and more than 60% of them had apartments as their primary residence. Analyzing the number of births of the interviewees reveals that cesarean deliveries are prevalent among them.

After analyzing semi-structured and in-depth interviews of mothers with three or more children, the extracted categories were classified into "*barriers to childbearing, motivational factors, and childbearing desires*".

Table 2. Classification of barriers to childbearing

The main or core category	Sub-categories	Concepts
		Negative attitude toward a family with many children
		Physicians' negative attitude toward childbearing, public hospitals' negative attitude toward having multiple children

Barriers to childbearing	Society's cultural view	Lack of respect for a family with many children, the spouse's family's comments about the number of children, a destructive view of a large number of children even by families, and parents encouraging the couple to abandon their desire to have many children.
		Having many children is considered uncivilized
		Limiting the number of children due to ageing
	Mother's physical condition	Limiting the number of children due to the method of delivering birth
		Limiting the number of children due to physical problems, Limiting the number of children due to physical weakness
	Economic issues	A limiting number of children due to hospital costs, high costs of birth-giving and treatment, medical expenses before birth-giving, and difficult birth-giving due to the poor economic situation
		Limiting the number of children due to the uncertainty of the children's future
		The children's school and education cost, the importance of the quality of children's education in addition to its high costs
		Limited facilities for children in public areas, inappropriate distribution of facilities in Tehran's metropolitan area, lack of substantial amenities, lack of facilities for families with several children
		Housing as the most important issue in childbearing, Not renting a house to families with multiple children
		Failing to consider family size in paying salaries
		A lack of transportation facilities for large families
		More economic pressure on families with larger populations
	Governance policies	The mother's negative view of the government's performance in the family issues, the mother's negative view of women's laws
		weak government policy in the area of childbearing, lack of support and assistance of government policies
		Lack of support for working women, insufficient knowledge of motherhood-related laws, lack of job stability for mothers
		Lack of family support, inadequate counseling

According to Table 2, barriers to childbearing from the perspective of research participants are the cultural perspective of society, the mother's physical condition, economic issues, and governance policies. From their point of view, there is a negative view of the family with a high number of

children. A 26-year-old mother due to give birth to her fourth kid, who already has three children, states:

"*If those who do not want children or who have one child are respected, why aren't those who wish to have five children respected? Well, the number of children is undoubtedly the family's decision, and there is no need to inquire whether the child is desired. For instance, it is believed that low-income and low-culture households have a greater number of children. For example, they hurt families with their remarks; such behavior is deemed rude. This family has a plan for their future. And there is no need to remind them of what meals they eat in this bad financial situation*".

Factors related to the mother's body are factors that, from the participants' perspective, have affected the number of their children and were discussed under the sub-category of the mother's physical condition. They considered physical weakness, type of delivery, and aging in this category.

"*I have severe anemia, and I am a minor and cesarean section ... I think I can't give birth to more than 5*" (37-year-old woman with 4 children).

I have severe anemia and I am a minor. I had a cesarean section delivery… I think I can't give birth to more than 5 children." (37-year-old woman with 4 children).

"*… Because of my cesarean delivery, which was a cesarean section, the number of cesarean sections does not exceed four, but I want five or six ...*" (26-year-old woman with three children and pregnant).

Addressing the economic strain on large families, a 36-year-old woman says:

"*We have a small apartment. But we rented a bigger apartment because the kids need more space*."

It can be said that almost all participants had a negative view of policies in the field of family and childbearing and agreed that, in reality, these policies do not aid childbearing.

A 38-year-old woman with 4 children said:

"*... Their policies are zero facilities, zero facilities in some places, the opposite, that is, the facilities are against entering a series of environments and jobs with a large population ....*"

Table 3. Categories of motivating factors of childbearing

The main or core category	Sub-categories	concepts
Motivating factors of childbearing	Religious beliefs	Order of supreme leader, reading biographies of martyrs, reciting the Qur'an, pilgrimage
		Religious approach
		Increase of Shiites in Iran
		Religious motivation for childbearing
	Support from others	Spouse's assistance, spouse's support in housework, spouse's assistance in caring for children, spouse's flexibility and support for mother in household chores
		Family assistance, financial support of the spouse's family in providing housing, intellectual reinforcement from the families, neighboring with the wife's mother - maternity assistance, financial and emotional encouragement of the mother's family in childbearing
		Using a maid for housework
		Good communication between father and children, the importance of the father-child relationship, The effect of the father-child relationship on their self-confidence, good father-child relationship, and vice versa
		Mother's friendly gathering, having similar friends with many children, using friends in playing with children
		Using the neighbor's potential because of being relatives, getting help from neighbors
	Economic stability	Upper average income, satisfaction with income level, good income status
		having a private house
	Mothering priority	Prioritizing mothering over education, prioritizing childbearing, prioritizing raising a child, home, and child over education
		The value of childbearing
		Looking at children as the joy of the family
		More effort to family satisfaction
		Negative view of kindergarten

According to in-depth interviews, the core category of motivating factors for childbearing can be extracted from the sub-categories of religious belief,

support of others, economic stability, and mothering priority, which can be achieved in the explicit text of the interviews:

One of the respondents said:

"*... Islam also requires us to be a thoughtful woman, an active woman, in fact, a woman aware of the times, all women who were the wives of imams ....*" (28-year-old woman with 4 children)

One of the reasons given by the interviewees for their interest in having a large number of children was to pay attention to the Supreme Leader's order on the issue of family size.

One of the interviewees:

"*The first, it was because of childbearing jihad and that the supreme leader was concerned about this...*" (37-year-old woman with 4 children)

The 38-year-old mother with 4 children, in response to a question about the number of children of her choice, said:

"*Actually, we had two children in mind.. The next two children* were born due to the Velayat Plan because the Supreme Leader recommended for reproduction.".

"Actually, we had two children in mind. The next two children were born due to the Velayat Plan because the Supreme Leader recommended reproduction."

A 38-year-old mother with 3 children said about her husband's support:

"*He helps me with household chores as much as he can because his working hours are long, which means that he is often at work on weekends, from morning to seven at night. If he was at home, he really would not have hesitated ...*"

A 35-year-old woman with 3 children also talks about her mother's countless help:

"*My family is very supportive, and I talk to my mother almost every day. Either I leave the kids with them, I take one, two, or all of the kids to class*

with me, or my mom takes the kids. As we arrive, lunch is prepared, and they extend a warm greeting to us. In a nutshell, my mum greatly assists."

Another participant said the following about her father-in-law's assistance and housing:

"*The house was supplied for us by my father-in-law. We were living in an apartment until the last two months when we moved to a house. He provided for us. He paid the money and bought it". (33-year-old woman with 3 children).*

Another interviewee also responded to family assistance:

" *Both sides help significantly. Help with finances (obviously, not much, but providing for the house with the father-in-law) and occasionally caring for the children when I needed it.*" (32-year-old woman with 3 children and pregnant).

Another participant describes his experience as a student who placed home and children first:

"... I did my best to prioritize my home responsibilities and perform them better and more thoroughly than in the past. The family has always been my top priority. I was active in the family as in the past .... "(34-year-old woman with 3 children and MA's degree).

It can be said that in the event of a conflict between employment or further education and family difficulties, including caring for their children, family roles were prioritized by the women interviewed.

In addition, in-depth interviews with mothers revealed that they expect the government and governing body to remove barriers and encourage childbearing, as shown in the table below.

Table 4. *Categories of expectations to facilitate childbearing*

The main or core category	Sub-categories	concepts
		Free delivery, natural delivery facilities, reduced pregnancy and delivery costs, type of delivery available to the mother

Expectations to facilitate childbearing	Healthcare	Importance of mother's health till the child reaches the age of two
		Insurance
		Nursing, daycare, weekly or monthly nurse or maid,
	Social culture	Father's leave
		Advertising in the field of childbearing, government media work
	Economy	Rent cost, give a mortgage
		Providing housing loans and housing rentals
		Increased compensation according to the number of children.
		Lowering the cost of products related to children, the condition of schools, low-cost education, establishing amenities for children in public areas, travel or recreation amenities, and emphasizing on kindergartens and schools for multiple-child families.

Their expectations were categorized into three areas: health, social culture, and economy.

An interviewer said about the culture of the society in the field of families with many children:

"*Changing attitudes is currently the most important task for the government. That is, the same broad advertisements that they ran in the 1990s should be run again, on television and elsewhere, in order to influence people's attitudes. If you wish to conceive a child, you should do so in calmly, without fear of others' judgment. The biggest thing that bothers that family in the first stage is fear of others' judgment…* "(37-year-old woman with 3 children).

The interviewee, who has four children, had the following healthcare expectations regarding childbirth and its expenses:

"*... Reduce medical costs for pregnancy, tests, and sonography, in other words, free* delivery *for all young mothers ....*"

Another mother suggested the following about economic issues:

"*The same for men. Enhance their child benefits, for instance, by providing a living package when a new child is born, considering the price of their*

diapers and powdered milk, and incentive packages for those who are not at all prepared to have children..." (37-year-old woman) Has 4 children and a tenant).

Based on the analysis of the findings, it can be concluded that educated women in research have given priority to motherhood to the extent that wherever employment or education was an obstacle for them to do better motherhood, they abandoned employment or education. From their point of view, motherhood included domestic roles and doing housework, satisfying their husband and accepting him as a manager, taking care of the children physically and mentally, and taking care of the children's education. During the research, women discussed various aspects of the impact of economic issues on their lives and considered the living conditions of their families as challenging, but despite all the economic problems, they did not see it as the main obstacle; Because some of the interviewees, with their low income and rented housing, tended to have more children. Perhaps the most important factor influencing childbearing in this study was religious beliefs; In the first place, they expressed concern about the population decline crisis raised by the Supreme Leader of the country and then raised other reasons such as the positive effects of raising many children or personal interest in many children.

Discussion and Conclusion

The population crisis is currently one of the main challenges in the country. Given that women play an essential role in changes in fertility rates, the study focuses on their challenges with fertility issues. Therefore, in this study, women with three or more children in Tehran concerned about continuing their education were studied to explore the issues affecting childbearing and the motivating factors. The extracted categories were classified as obstacles to childbearing, motivating factors for childbearing, and expectations to facilitate childbearing. The sub-categories of barriers to having children were the cultural view of the society, the mother's medical condition, economic issues, and governance policies. The economy was one of the most important factors that concerned women and their families and posed obstacles. They anticipated that the government would take action in this area and provide assistance to families with a large number of children, which is partly consistent with the findings of Abdullahi and Farjadi (2015), Daliri (2017),

Mazinani and Mohamadian (2022). It was consistent with one of Rafii Moghadam and Ashtiani's (2019) research findings that the economic and social middle class had a larger desire to have children, as the majority of the participants in the interviews were families from this class. Therefore, it cannot be argued that economic factors were the primary influence on these families' reproductive decisions because those interviewed were persons who, according to themselves, have three or more children while having a moderate or low salary and rented home. They expressed a wish to have additional children. In these instances, it can be claimed that economic theories of fertility were relatively inadequate.

Motivational factors for childbearing that were extracted according to interviews were religious beliefs, family support, economic satisfaction, and maternal priority. Religious beliefs were one of the most influential factors in encouraging families to have children; this finding was consistent with the results of Modiri research (2017) and Rezvani et al. (2020), which indicated that beliefs cause a positive attitude towards childbearing and increased childbearing. Most women talked about the support of those around them, such as their families, mothers, and spouses. Their spouses, who often had higher education, had a transcendent view of the division of domestic work and assisted their spouses in various housekeeping and parenting tasks as far as they could afford. The women also said there was a good relationship between their children and their fathers, which made them content. It can be said that this effect of a father's participation in childbearing is consistent with the results of research by Razeghi Nasrabad et al. (2021) and Esther and Profeta (2020) on its positive effect on childbearing and the theory of gender equality.

The findings on the positive impact of family support on childcare are also similar to that of Wang and Zhao (2021) in China. Motherhood was a priority for the interviewees, and they had a positive view of their traditional duty as a mother and a wife at home. They also viewed doing their homework as their duty and viewed it as a factor in encouraging childbearing, which was consistent with the findings of Chamani et al. (2016), who believed that the loss of traditional female identity was a factor in reducing childbearing. This study's interviews were conducted during the outbreak of Covid 19 disease,

which, because of limits on travel and face-to-face visits, prevented the opinions from being viewed in person and, to some extent, diminished the quality of the research. The time limitation allowed us to focus exclusively on Tehran women with three or more children. In addition, according to the snowball sampling method, the selected individuals were generally on the same ideological spectrum, which was one of the research's weaknesses. In light of the limitations of this study, it is recommended that the entire country's statistical population of women with three or more children be investigated and that quantitative research be used to achieve generalizable conclusions. In this study, none of the economic theories of fertility could adequately explain the findings. There is a need for scholars to examine all facets of financial concerns and give particular attention to other factors, such as religious and cultural issues.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical codes of conducting human research; In order to comply with ethical issues in qualitative research, at the beginning of the interview process, they were informed in a message about the identity of the interviewer, the type of university where they studied, and the purpose of the study. Participants who were willing to respond gave their consent and answered questions. In addition, in order to protect their privacy, a number was allocated to each individual, and various participants were utilized in the references so as not to present an image of a particular individual.

institution. When submitting the article, it adhered to publication ethics and avoided plagiarism and data fabrication.

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