GENERAL ARTICLE

An Analysis on Views of Iranian Women about Incentive Policies on Childbearing Decision-making

Masoumeh Hosseinpour¹, Mahdi Asadi²,
Fariba Keshavarz¹, Saeed Sobhanian^{3*}, Athar
Rasekh Jahromi⁴, Fatemeh Moloudi⁵

¹Student Research Committee of Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran

²Department of Emergency Medicine, Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran

³Department of Community Health, Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran

⁴Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran

⁵Department of periodontology, Assistant professor of Shiraz Dental School, Shiraz, Iran.

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Abstract

Women's insight of childbearing toward incentive policies population has always been remaining underneath. In this descriptive study, we enrolled 662 women between the ages of 15 and 49 years. Survey was done by distributing a questionnaire with 13 questions on incentive policy and three questions on the number of the child they desire to have and who are the decision maker for childbearing and tend to childbearing if incentive policies apply. Most women were seen to support the incentive policies. Most participants wished to have less than 3 children. Surprisingly, 379 participants (57%) didn't wish to decide about childbearing and repeated pregnancy if the Incentive policies get applied. There are some elements viz., living place, income rate, provide facilities like free foodstuffs basket which would be essential to increase the childbearing decision-making.

Introduction:

Spopulation policy is a set of measures which is taken by a state. In Iran, the population policy has passed through varies phases since 1972 to 2000 (U.N.Stats, 2013). Indeed, there is one of the fastest reduction in fertility rates was seen in Iran (Eberstadt & Shah, 2013). Fertility rate decreased from 1966; ~7.7 to ~6.0 in 1976, and then again rose to 7.0 in 1980. The family planning methods were approved before the revolution in 1979, which was again suspended after the revolution. The legal minimum age for marriage of the girls and boys was reduced to 9 and 12 years and further the war with Iraq create such an atmosphere which ultimately provoke the families to have more children (Eberstadt & Shah, 2013; Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2005; Shadi-Talab, 2001; Abbasi-Shavazi, 2000). Unfortunately, the fertility started to decline by the mid-1980s. The fertility rate declined from ~6.8 (1984) to ~6.3 (1986). The fertility rate declined sharply after 1989, which was more than a 50 percent declination in total 6 years. Declination of the fertility rate was reported from 2.2 births per woman in 2000 to 1.6 in 2012 by Eberstadt & Shah, 2013; Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2005; Shadi-Talab, 2001). Nevertheless, some variations within some cities of Iran were also recorded. The highest rate of fertility was seen in Khuzestan whereas the Tehran and Isfahan showed the lowest fertility rates. The low fertility

rate among Iran's 75 million people has produced a dramatic change in the cover-up of the population now. Some factors such as proper higher education, availability of the proper health network system in remote areas, economic strength, staying in education longer, delaying marriage are likely to have an indirect effect on fertility rate declination. Today, the sociologists of Iran are getting more concerned about the future of the country's population (Kariman *et al.*, 2014). Keeping in mind about the reduced rate of population, in the year 2012, the government of Iran started an incentive policy as per which, Housekeeping has been considered as a career and in which provision of pension also allocated. In addition, policies like 'Monthly reward children', 'increase the duration of maternity leave', 'Mandatory insurance coverage for treatment of mothers and children', 'A monthly salary of unemployed women with young children', 'Free food cart for pregnant women' altogether have also promoted in a large scale. Although childbearing decision-making is a complex process which is usually influenced by various factors (Erfani, 2013) it seems Iranian families did not take much interest to have more children, influenced by incentive policies. With regard to the fact, the women played a major role in decision-making for the childbearing and till date very little effort has been made on women's insight about childbearing

*Corresponding Author: sobhaniansaeed@gmail.com

influenced by incentive policies, we decided to investigate the proper reason behind the failure of such childbearing decision-making policy.

Methodology:

The study was a descriptive-analytic, using stratified randomized sampling among women between the ages of 15 and 49 years. As per the prevalence for childbearing tendency in reported in the previous studies (Shadi-Talab, 2001), we calculated sample size which is as follows; prevalence=60%, confidence interval=95%, relative error margins=10%, and the base population=100000. Cochran formula suggested the minimum sample size requirement was 662 individuals from women.

The current study was conducted from October 2013 to February 2015 in the south of Iran. The survey was done on the basis of a questionnaire. The first section contained socio-demographic questions (Age, Education, Marital status, Occupation, Income), followed by the second set which included 13 questions about incentive policy and trend to fertility.

The participants were asked to answer on the basis of five given choices- i) totally disagree, ii) disagree, iii) no comment iv) agree and v) totally agree. Questionnaire included various categories which were as follows: i) low economic status families lead to less likely to fertility, ii) improving the economic status of the family tend to have more children, iii) having more children lowers the welfare of the family, iv)-having more children prevent parents' educational progress, v) childbearing does not conflict with social activities, vi) concerns about the future of children effect on decisions for pregnancy, vii) Providing free food basket by the government may be more incentives for mothers, viii) Considering the monthly salaries for non-working women and housewives can effect on the desire to pregnancy, ix) Compulsory insurance of the mother and the child is effective to have children, x) Remove the lack of insurance coverage for the fourth child and more is effective to have more children, xi) Increase the duration of maternity leave for working woman could be effective to have more children, xii) In regard to pension insurance for housewives could be effective to have more children, xiii) Number of children is effect on tendency to have children. Further, they were asked three additional questions about the number of the child which they want to have and regarding the same who are the decision maker for the same and tend to childbearing if incentive policies would apply.

Statistical analysis: Data analyses were done by descriptive statistic method; Mean, sd, CI, frequency and etc. Logistic regression was used to predict, changing insight amount among participant. This is dependent variable in the presence of other independent variables.

Results:

Mean, sd, range and 95% CI of demographic questionnaire have been presented in Table-1. A total of 662 participant in their reproductive age in between 15-49 years (mean age =29±8.75 years) were enrolled in this descriptive-analytic study. Mean income was revealed 391.190±780.47 (IRR). Mean marriage duration was found 9.57±9.14 year. Mean number of male child was recorded as 5.6±.81, whereas female number - 5.6±.93. Mean spouse income decalred by the participants was 1285.79±870.77 (Iranian Rial).

The frequency of response with respect to the degree of agreement about incentive policies for childbearing has been showed in Table-2, according to which most of the women were agreeing to accept the incentive policies. One of the important questions was about the number of Childs participants wish to perceive and in response to which most of the participants shown interest in having less than 3 children (Table-3). Due to having some strong traditionally culture/rule, the decision for childbearing depends on some other family members too therefore we asked participant in other question about that and illustrate in Table-4. As it could be seen in the Table-4, 78.3% of them agree with answer that both woman and man decide about childbearing. The most important question from us was about the repeated pregnancy and child bearing decision making if incentive policies would applied (q16). In response, it is somewhat surprising that 379 (57%) of participants overruled the decision of childbearing and repeated pregnancy. The Logistic regression was used for the prediction of changing insight of participant in the presence of other variables. The goodness of fit test (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) with $p=0.387$ Showed that Logistic regression is possible. The Cox & Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square indicated that variances are explained in this study between 0.120 to 0.160. The results of calculation B and Exp (B) was shown that agreement of childbearing had an inverse correlation with child number and had direct correlation with other variables (Table 5).

Finally the regression Equation:

$$\frac{*P}{1-P} = \log(\text{residency} * 0.848 - \text{child.no} * 0.560 + q2 - 0.255 + q7 - 0.421 + q12 * 0.268 + q14 * 0.822)$$

*:ratio of yes/no in q16

Discussion:

During past half century, the reproduction rate in the developing countries decreased but such decrement in Iran was surprising (Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2005). It ignites the Iran government to apply such policies which could encourage the Iranian people for bearing more children. Our study was designed to answer few relevant the question- "Do the change in government's policies (social, economic, cultural) cause to change in women's attitude?" According to few earlier survey studies, the

GENERAL ARTICLE

changes in couple's attitude about childbearing could be manipulated by some big changes in their attitude about reproduction ideals and having children (Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2005). Study about the descriptive indicators of samples in this study (table-1), indicated that the samples are reliable for generalizing them to statistical society. Investigating about the redundancy of nearly agreeing and completely agreeing levels in response to the first question, it was found that family ' income is obviously the important factor for increasing the number of children. The current search results revealed that 46.2 % of people declared that due to the ill economic condition they don't want to have more children whereas 39.8 % had stated that improvement in family's economic condition would increase the couple's willingness to have more children. Various studies were about effective elements about couples' attitude and due to which sometimes different results have been reported. For example, the couples in Tabriz are having less income source which bounded them to having more children. It was already reported by Kalantari *et al.*, (2010) that the couples who have less income are more willing to have more children, a somewhat same report was given by Mahmoudi *et al.* (2013). In Iran women's idea depends on more income (Mahmoudi *et al.* 2013) nevertheless, Farrokh-Eslamlou *et al.* (2013) reported that the women's decision is independent of their family income. It may be due to some specific religious structure of the society.

Our 2nd set of questionnaire clearly revealed that Iranian women are more willing to have more children as compared to their men and that is only due to their innate willingness. But the process of answering the questions shows that childbearing increscent in society does not only depend on women's willingness as they also get worried about financial hitches. High performance on positive attitude towards agreeing to completely agreeing answers in 3rd and 4th questions show that most of the participants have a concept that having more children cause to decrease level of welfare and they believe in this subject- "fewer children, More welfare" and which maybe exist in them with regards to their past training. As per Mansourian & Khoshnevis (2006), proper training is very important in changing ideas/concept and attitude which can influence/alter people's thoughts which are embedded in them since their childhood. However, the approximate equality of agreeing and disagreeing ideas express the existence of a social solution and the importance of social and educational improvement and growth until the existence of the child is not a preventive to this improvement. The study of Aghajanian (1991) supports our result but the Kalantari (2010)'s study do not support our findings. Perhaps, it was because of variation in their existing social structures which are mainly based on their proper education and women's preferment. High frequency of agreeing and completely agreeing ideas in

6th question illustrate that families are always worried about their children's future without any attention to their family's members and this problem is the result of unpredictable and inconsistent economic situation of our country. Farrokh-Eslamlou *et al.* (2013) reported that in Iran, women worried about the inconsistent economic situation of families. Not so much redundancy of agreeing attitudes in 7th question show that giving free foodstuffs basket does not make any effect in childbearing decision-making. The 8th question shows the positive effects of more income in increasing the childbearing and this subject is confirmed in research elsewhere (Andersson *et al.*, 2014). The approximate equality of agreeing and disagreeing attitudes in 9th and 10th question illustrate that about half of the sample society have other worries in addition to compulsory insurance for having children.

Interestingly, the idea of, let the women leave the work even without salary is important to increase women's willingness for having more in families with financial problems. Also, let the women leave the job is more secure for them. But high redundancy of agreeing on the answer in 12th question show that allocates more retirement benefits to housewives that constituted a large group in the society trepan a guarantee for the responsibility that each woman feels to have about her child's future. High controversy regarding agreeing and completely agreeing attitudes on 13th question indicate that in women's concept, the number of existing children in the family is effective on increasing childbearing, but in answer to the question that was about the number of children, most of them want 2 or 3 children. Further, the women also believe that making the decision about the number of children should be agreed by the couple the conception was already reported by Farrokh-Eslamlou *et al.* (2014) in their study. Finally, it was found that 43.9% of women were willing to have children if the encouraging policies would well execute. This opinion was strengthened by Billari (2008)'s work but weakened by Mahmoudi *et la.* (2013) study.

Conclusively, as illustrated in the regression equation some elements such as living place, income rate, the number of children, providing facilities like free foodstuffs basket or considering retirement insurance for housewives are predictable to increase the childbearing decision-making. The data suggests that most of the women agree with social and financial policies that have been executed by the government and are willing to increase their number of children, but the government's encouraging proceedings in 4 provinces especially in Western Azarbayejan were just shown the reverse opinion where 80% of women shown their unwillingness to have more children even by governmental encouraging policies and proceedings (Erfani, 2013).

The research and ethics committee of Jahrom University of Medical Sciences has approved the study protocol and approval ID is Jums.REC.1393.026. All

participants signed an informed consent prior to participating in the study.

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Table 1- Individual's characteristics

Para-Meter	Mean	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		SD	Min-mum	Max-mum	Range
		Lower	Upper				
Age	29	28	31	8.751	15	49	34
Income	391.19	300.24	482.14	780.47	0	7000	7000
Marriage duration	9.57	8.50	10.64	9.14	.0	30	30
Total Son	5.6	4.7	6.6	.81	0	4	4
Total Daughter	6.5	4.5	6.7	.93	0	5	5
Spouse income	1285.79	1184.24	1387.32	870.77	0	5000	5000

Table 2- The frequency of response to the degree of agreement about Incentive policies for childbearing

	totally disagree n/%	Somewhat disagree n/%	No comments n/%	Somewhat agree n/%	Totally agree n/%
Q1	44/6.6%	57/8.6%	33/5%	224/33.6%	308/46.2%
Q2	65/9.8	124/18.7%	66/9.9%	264/39.8%	145/21.8%
Q3	45/6.8%	110/16.5%	69/10.4%	208/31.3%	233/35%
Q4	45/12.3%	110/16.3%	69/8%	208/31.3%	233/32.1%
Q5	100/15.1%	186/28%	108/16.3%	150/22.6%	120/18.1%
Q6	34/5.1%	37/5.6%	55/8.3%	242/34.4%	297/44.7%
Q7	102/15.3%	80/12%	131/19.7%	194/29.2%	158/23.8%
Q8	54/8.1%	61/9.2%	110/16.5%	224/33.7%	216/32.5%
Q9	92/13.9%	139/21%	193/29.1%	138/20.8%	101/15.2%
Q10	108/16.3%	99/14.9%	171/25.8%	168/25.3%	118/17.8%
Q11	58/8.7%	75/11.3%	157/23.6%	172/25.9%	201/30.3%
Q12	51/7.7%	52/7.8%	125/18.8%	211/31.7%	226/34%
Q13	38/5.7%	37/5.6%	104/15.6%	202/30.4%	284/42.7%

Q= question; n=total number; %= total percentage

Table3- The number of children, participants wish to have

Number of child	Frequency	Valid Percent
0	2	0.3
1	24	3.7
2	174	26.5
3	325	49.5
4	129	19.6
5	1	0.2
6	1	0.2
7	1	0.2

Table 4- Decision maker for childbearing in the family

Family member	Frequency	Valid Percent
Husband	67	10.2
Wife	66	10.1
Both	512	78.3
Other	9	1.4

Table 5- Prediction of changing insight

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Residency	0.848	0.371	5.225	1	0.022	2.336	1.129	4.834
Child.no	-0.560	0.104	28.781	1	0.000	.571	0.466	0.701
q2	0.255	0.112	5.162	1	0.023	1.290	1.036	1.608
q7	0.421	0.102	17.071	1	0.000	1.524	1.248	1.860
q12	0.268	0.125	4.564	1	0.033	1.307	1.022	1.672
q14	0.822	0.185	19.669	1	0.000	2.274	1.582	3.270
Constant	-6.224	0.926	45.152	1	0.000	0.002		

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