

## ASPIRATIONS OF FATHERS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the interplay of aspirations of fathers for their children and fertility behaviour through an empirical study. What are their aspirations regarding education and occupation of their children? What advantages or disadvantages they perceive of a large number of children and do they limit their family size as a consequence of their perceived disadvantages of a large family size? The findings indicate that fathers in lower class families have higher educational and occupational aspirations for their sons. They are not in favour of higher education or employment of daughters. Fathers are aware of the several disadvantages of large families; that it hinders better child socialization and increases family expenditure. In spite of their awareness they are not inclined to limit their family size as they feel that fertility control is un-Islamic.

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### INTRODUCTION

The approach of the study is different from the usual macro-analysis of fertility behaviour that relates macro-societal variables such as socio-economic conditions of society to fertility behaviour and its implications on development of society. Practically, macro propositions are insufficient in understanding fertility behaviour as such propositions lead to over generalization thereby leading to increased expenditures on services unsuitable to our cultural demands, which adversely affect the development process in Pakistani society.

In our country, we need to identify the factors that intervene in between socio-economic conditions of society and fertility. Such factors operate at the micro level phenomenon as the family institution, which provides the basis for development in all aspects of society. The concern here is with the most important agent of change

in the family i.e. the father.

### **IMPORTANCE OF MALES IN FERTILITY CONTROL**

Pakistani society is male dominated and the basic weakness of our population programme is that it is female oriented. Male motivation is not predominantly spelled out in population programmes. Decision-making, specifically, in lower class families rests with the husband. His value orientations, aspirations, ambitions and religious interpretations determine largely the decisions regarding family size. Better education and occupation of his children can be a desire or a goal he wants to achieve and therefore he may accept limiting his family size as an important means of achieving the goal. As such, aspirations of fathers for their children can be an important factor in explaining their fertility behaviour.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The universe of the study comprised married male employees of an organization. For the purpose of the present study, the criteria that seemed practical is selecting the study unit of fertility behaviour was, firstly, the unit was accessible for empirical observation at my disposal. Secondly, it was meaningful as males are the decision makers in our society and thirdly, it is the unit towards which educational and service programmes regarding fertility can be easily directed.

The study concentrated only on the lower income cadre instead of all cadres, as fertility problems are more prevalent in lower class families and effect of other variables could be minimized. A male employee of grade I-VI Married, having wife in the child bearing age thus formed the unit of analysis. A total of 30% respondents Grade I-VI were selected randomly from each department which came up to 90 respondents. The data was collected through an interview schedule. Sophisticated statistical

techniques have not been used due to lack of time, computer facility and the sample too was small.

#### **RELATED LITERATURE**

A number of researchers have attempted to identify key variables in planning and evaluating fertility control.

Hill Stycos and Back (1959) developed a scheme specifying hypothetical interrelationships of selected intervening variables in fertility. The scheme included specific family and birth control attitudes, importance of children, family role allocation and communication pattern. Bogue (1965) had identified factors such as aspirations for future of children, education and occupation of husbands. Population Association of America in its special publication on Demography (1968) reported that in general the practice of family planning is not directly related to knowledge of its methods but lack of motivation and conviction regarding fertility control are intervening variables, in the developing countries. Farhat et al. (1977) in a comprehensive study on Family Structure and Fertility Outcome in Sindh, Pakistan, found that contraceptive use was significantly related to the kind of aspirations parents have for their children. Modern aspiring parents were found to use more contraceptives compared to traditional aspiring parents. Similarly, parents with lesser interest in child education were less likely the users. Mirza, Laeeq et al. (1980) in a study on Male Motivation for Family Planning, found that aspiration for more children was determined by the aspiration to have more sons and the dominant reason for not practicing family planning was that it was considered against religion.

#### **MAJOR FINDINGS**

**Descriptive Characteristics:** The age of respondents

ranged between 23 to 58 years. Average age was 37 years.

Overall educational level of the respondents was low. About 31% of respondents had secondary level of education and 61% were educated upto primary level. Only 8% were Graduates and non M.A. or above.

The income level was also low with the basic salary ranging in between Rs.500.00 to Rs.2000.00.

As regards the type of occupation majority of the respondents were cooks 28% and waiters and dishwashers 29%. Clerks were 12%, receptionists 7.7% and security guards 6.67%. See Table-1.

**TABLE - I**  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**  
**ACCORDING TO THEIR OCCUPATION**

Occupation	Percentage of Respondents
Clerks	11.11
Receptionists	07.78
Mechanics	04.44
Waiters	15.56
Cooks	27.78
Housemen	13.33
Dishwashers	13.33
Security Guards	06.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>

There were 43.44% respondents who use contraceptives and 56.66% who do not use contraceptives.

Distribution of respondents according to number of living boys and girls indicate that 32.22% respondents had one son, 20% had 2 sons and 11.11% have 3 sons. Similarly 33% had 1 daughter 28.8% 2 daughters and

13.3% 3 daughters. Overall, there were more daughters than sons. The average number of children was 4.

#### **ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN**

**Aspirations for Additional Number of Children:** The findings reveals that about 57% of the respondents aspire for additional children in their families while 43% do not want more children.

**Aspiration to have Sons and Daughters:** Almost, an equal majority of fathers (31% & 26%) want to have 1-3 more sons, and 1-3 more daughters respectively. This interesting finding tends to weaken the commonly held notion in our country that sons are far more desired than daughters. Although more fathers want sons but their percentage is not very high. 14% of the respondents said they would welcome any number of sons or daughters as it was God's will.

**Level of Education Aspired for Sons and Daughters:** For the current purpose education was classified into higher and lower levels of education. Higher education meant education upto B.A. or above and lower education was taken as education upto Intermediate. Most of the fathers in this study (72.2%) aspire higher level of education for their sons whereas 27.7% fathers go for lower education of their sons. Of those aspiring higher level education 24.4% want their sons to be graduates and 34.4% mentioned "as higher education as possible". Of those desiring lesser education 15.5% want to educate sons upto Matric and 10% upto Intermediate. Only one of the fathers in this study mentioned professional education i.e. M.B.B.S. for his son. This indicates the fact that fathers being lesser educated themselves are not aware of the concept and means of professional education. All that they know is that the higher the education the better it is.

As regards daughters, majority of the fathers (65.5%) desired lower level of education. Of these, 50% desired education ranging between 6th class to Matric class only. Those aspiring higher education for daughters are 34.4%. Overall findings indicate that fathers aspired higher level of education for boys than for girls.

**Educational Aspirations for sons and Daughters in Relation to Fertility Behaviour:** Fertility behaviour was reviewed in terms of contraceptive usage by respondents. Data in Table-2 indicates that of the fathers having lower educational aspirations for their sons. Majority of them (68%) are non users of contraceptives while only 32.% are users. Among the high aspiring fathers there is almost an equal majority of users and non-users i.e. 47.69% and 52.31% respectively.

**TABLE - II**  
**LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR SONS IN RELATION TO**  
**CONTRACEPTIVE USAGE**

Level of Education for Sons	Contraceptive Usage		Total
	Yes	No	
High	31 (47.69%)	34 (52.31%)	65
Low	8 (32.00%)	17 (68.00%)	25
Total	39	51	90

As regards aspiration level for daughters again it is evident from Table-3 that among the low aspiring fathers majority (64.41%) are non-users and among the high aspiring majority (58.06%) are users.

**TABLE - III**  
**LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR DAUGHTERS IN**  
**RELATION TO CONTRACEPTIVE USAGE**

Level of Education for Daughters	Contraceptive Usage		Total
	Yes	No	
High	18 (58.06%)	13 (41.94%)	31
Low	21 (35.59%)	38 (64.41%)	59
Total	39	51	90

These findings indicate that fathers who have low aspirations for their children, are less likely to use contraceptives to limit their family size.

**The Level of Occupation Aspired for Sons and Daughters:** The type of occupations aspired for sons by most of the respondents was Doctor (17.5%) an Engineer (11.1%). Other occupations preferred for sons were Army, Business and Government Service by an equal majority i.e. 6.6% respondents choosing each occupation. A very meager percentage (2.2%) preferred their sons to be Mechanics, Teachers, Lawyers, Bankers and Farmers. It is interesting to note that 28% of the respondents just desired that their sons get "Any Service" or stated that it is "God's Will" what their son's occupation would be in future.

As regards their daughters all the respondents (96%) want them to be housewives except for (4.4%) respondents who would like their daughter to be school teachers.

**Occupational Aspirations for Sons in Relation to Fertility Behaviour:** Occupational aspirations were

classified, for the current purpose into lower aspirations; those ambitious that were linked to "Fate" or "Any Service". Higher aspirations meant clear specification of occupations linked to future success of child.

Occupational aspirations for children, sex-wise, was analyzed in relation to fertility behaviour of fathers. It was assumed that fathers with lower occupational aspirations for children were less likely to use contraceptives.

Evidence in Table-4 tends to support the above assumption and it emerges that majority of the parents (84.62%) with lower occupational aspirations for sons do not use contraceptives. Moreover among the users there is comparatively a higher percentage of fathers (54.69%) with higher occupational aspirations.

**TABLE-IV**  
**LEVEL OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATION FOR SONS IN**  
**RELATION TO CONTRACEPTIVE USAGE**

Level of Occupational for Sons	Contraceptive Usage		Total
	Yes	No	
High	35 (54.69%)	29 (45.31%)	64
Low	04 (15.38%)	22 (84.62%)	59
Total	39	51	90

#### **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MORE CHILDREN**

**Advantages:** Respondents of the study were inquired about the advantages of having more children in the family. Interestingly an overwhelming majority (56.66%) feel that with more children there is a cheerful atmosphere in the family. The second-most reported



advantage was economic support in old age (48.8%) and thirdly, more earning members in the family (31.1%). Fear of death of children was reported by (14.4%) and no advantage by (37.7%).

**Disadvantages:** Data in Table-5 indicates that the predominantly reported disadvantage of more children was, bad socialization of children (68.8%) and secondly increase in expenditure (67.7%). Deterioration of mother's health was cited by (52.2%) and conflicts in the family due to more children by (43.3%). There were also (15%) who said that there is no disadvantage of more children.

**TABLE - V**  
**PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO DIS-ADVANTAGES OF MORE CHILDREN (MULTIPLE CHOICE)**

Disadvantages	Percentage of Respondents
Conflicts in Family	43.33
Mother's Health	52.22
Increase in Expenditure	67.07
Bad Socialization of Children	68.89
No Disadvantage	15.56

**REASON FOR NOT USING CONTRACEPTIVES**

There were (43.33%) respondents who were using contraceptives and (56.66%) who do not use contraceptives.

**TABLE - VI**  
**PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REASONS FOR NOT USING CONTRACEPTIVES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)**

Reasons	Percentage of Respondents
Contraceptive usage is un-Islamic	56.66
Do not know any Method	07.84
Do not know where to get advice/contraceptive	05.08
Not allowed in family	07.84

The non-users were inquired about the reasons for not using contraceptives (see Table-6). Nearly all the non-users (56.66%) are of the view that contraceptive usage is un-Islamic and they reported that children are a God's gift so one should not use any method. Along with stating that it is un-Islamic other reasons pointed out by the non-users were: do not know any method (4.84%). Do not know from where to get advice or contraceptive (05.8%) and (7.84%) said it is not allowed in their families.

These findings indicate that there is a general impression in the lower class males that limiting ones family size by contraceptive usage is un-Islamic. Although a number of these persons are conscious of the disadvantages evident from Table-5, they do feel that more children hinder better child socialization and increase family expenditure, still they are afraid to practice family planning due to its vague religious interpretations.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POPULATION PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

From the findings of the study it appears that tremendous obstacles still remain in the field of fertility control in our country. Attitude of males is one of them. The basic weakness of our population programme is that it is female oriented while Pakistani Society is male dominated where males play a major role in family decision making. There is a need to provide males with a clear conception of family planning.

Male attitude towards fertility control is largely determined by its religious interpretations which are undermining the very basis of fertility control in Pakistan. A realistic approach of bringing about change in male attitude could be from the religious platform. Example can be taken from the largest Muslim Country Indonesia.

The Government needs to sponsor research projects concentrating on religious concept of family limitation. Unless the religious interpretation of family planning is not researched upon by scholars and made clear to the public, all efforts would be fruitless. The findings also indicate that even the lower class males are aware of the several disadvantages of large family size. In spite of their awareness, their guilt feeling that it is un-Islamic keeps them reluctant to accept it even if they do accept it the guilt feeling of it being un-Islamic dominates.

From the analysis of fertility and aspirations it emerges that fathers in families still have lower aspirations regarding education of girls and are not in favour of employment of their daughters. At the same time when fathers have lower occupational or educational aspiration for girls, there is no contraceptive use. This has an important implication for population programmes and women's role in development. Steps should be accelerated for creating higher aspirations among parents regarding girls. Adult literacy programmes laying more emphasis on child rearing and providing greater insight about better occupational options for children are likely to encourage a climate of modernization about fertility control.

Motivation of employees in the light of religion in various public and private organizations could be a practical approach which could be done through:

- a) Hospital and Doctors on the panel of organizations.
- b) Through one or two lectures during in-service training programmes organized within these organizations.
- c) Mass media should be utilized to propagate religious concept of family planning through plays and literatures in local languages.

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