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Perceptions and Realities about Family Size and Son Preference in Urban Area of District Faisalabad (Pakistan)

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is at middle stage of demographic transition with high population growth rate compared with many other developing societies. This high growth rate primarily is due to the large family size, which is defined within the socio-cultural dimensions of the society. The enormous population growth hinders the socio-economic development of society. This study will particularly explore the socio-economic and cultural aspects of family size and son preference. The present study was an attempt to investigate the various factors faced by urban people in the social, economic and cultural fields. The major objective of the study was to determine the family size under the influence of desire family and son preference in urban areas of district Faisalabad. Through random sample method, Faisalabad city was selected. In Faisalabad city, three areas i.e. Tariq Abad, Raza Abad and Peoples Colony No. 1, were selected by using simple random method from the list of areas in Faisalabad city. A sample of 150 married females of age 15 - 45 (reproductive behavior) having at-least one children were selected. 50 respondents were selected by using snow ball sampling techniques were applied for the selection of sample in the selected area. It is concluded those socio-economic characteristics in term of women education, family income and demographic factors: age at marriage has being upon the family size.

Key Words: Social economic cultural aspects; Awareness; Ideal family size; Son preference

INTRODUCTION

The timing of marriage and first birth are the two important aspects of family formation. Most of the Asian countries are experiencing in recent years a decline in population growth rate, while Pakistan is still the most populous country in the world. Its population is 149.03 million as compared to 32.5 million at the time of independence, showing there by an increase of more than four fold (Government of Pakistan, 2003).

The desire for sons is associated with low contraceptive prevalence. It has been noted that the value of sons is a key hindrance to follow family planning. There is some evidence of a change in attitude in this regard. Attitudinal change is paramount to re-design the family planning programme according to the needs of people (Zafar, 2002).

Fertility in Pakistan has been declining slowly. The population of Pakistan was growing at the rate of 2.7% per annum around 1960s. In response to concern about rapid growth, a national policy of slowing population growth was articulated in the 1960s, with a program appeared to have had hardly any impact on growth rate. The total fertility rate (TFR) continued to remain high between 6 - 7 births per woman throughout the 1970s and 1980s and the population growth rate approached and possibly exceeded three percent per annum (Zeba, 2001).

The use of contraceptive is extremely low in Pakistan. By the mid of July 1997, it was estimated at 24.0%. There is a big gap between the knowledge of family planning (91.0%) and the adoption (24.0%) of contraceptive methods (Siddiq, 1997).

In Pakistan, strong son preference has been noted, because sons are regarded as economic assets and old-age security (Ali, 1989). More recent data from Pakistan further confirms the continued desire for sons (NIPS, 1992). The Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey of 1990 - 91 showed that, of the women with no children, about one-third desired to have a son, while the preference for having a daughter was negligible. Among those who had two daughters and no son, almost all (93%) wanted their next child to be a son. However, the incidence of wider neglect of female children or preferential treatment for male children was not evident from the data (Karim, 1994). The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To find out association of socio-economic factors with family size of the respondents.
2. To know the perceptions and motives for preferring sons over daughters.
3. To explore the effect of religion affiliation in family size and son preference.
4. To suggest measures to the Government to address the issue of family size and son preference.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in urban areas of District Faisalabad. In Faisalabad city three areas i.e., Tariqabad,

Razabad and Peoples Colony No. 1, were selected through simple random method. Married females (150) of age 15 - 45 (reproductive behavior) having at-least one children were selected. Respondents (50) were selected using snow- ball sampling techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The timing of marriage and first birth are the two important aspects of family formation (Government of Pakistan, 2003). This study revealed that a huge majority (45.33%) of the respondents married up to 25 years of age only (19.33%) of the respondents were above age of 26 years. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents (50.67%) were 9 - 12 years of schooling, while (31.33%) of the respondents were above F.A. or B.A. The data showed that a great majority of the respondents (92.67%) were housewives only (7.33%) respondents were doing job. Income level of (54%) was more than was above 7000 rupees monthly from all sources, while (25.33%) respondents monthly income from all sources was upto 7000 rupees and (20.67%) respondents monthly income from all sources was more than 7000 rupees per month. The data indicate that majority of the respondents (74%) were lived in joint family system while (26%) respondents were living in nuclear family. The data reflects that significant majority (96.67%) of the respondents' marriage, was arranged by their parents remaining (3.33%) respondent's marriage was love marriage (Table I). The data further showed that (24.67%) of the respondents were got pregnant 3 times, 24% 2 times, 32% of the respondents were got pregnant from 4 times to more and only (19.33%) of the respondents reported that they become pregnant only 1 time. The total fertility rate (TFR) continued to remain high between six and seven births per woman throughout the 1970s and 1980s and the population growth rate approached and possibly exceeded three percent per annum (Zeba, 2001). Majority (98%) of the respondents had not miscarriage or abortion, while (8%) of the respondents faces 1 time and (2%) of the respondents faced 2 times miscarriage or abortion in their reproductive life (Table II). The data reflects that 37.3% of the respondents thought that ideal family range is 6 children, while (52.7%) of the respondents reported that an ideal family belongs to 4 children and (88.7%) respondents showed that having 2 children consider small family (Table III).

The preference for sons is perceived as having both economic and social benefits (Chaudhary, 1996). The studies showed that majority 58.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement "better to be childless rather than to have female children", while 41.3% of the respondents were disagreed. 57.3% of the respondents agreed that "a family with more male children brings economic prosperity to the family", whereas 42.7% of the respondents were disagreed. Only 48% of the respondents agreed while 52% disagreed that "A woman with male children received great

Table I. Respondent's Socio-Economic Characteristics

Statement	Frequency	%
Age at Marriage		
15-20	53	35.33
21-25	68	45.33
26+	29	19.33
Total	150	100.0
Education		
0-8	27	18.00
9-12	76	50.67
13+	47	31.33
Total	150	100.0
Occupation		
House Wife	139	92.67
Job	11	7.33
Total	150	100.0
Monthly Income from all		
Up-to 7000	38	25.33
7001-15000	81	54.00
15001+	31	20.67
Total	150	100.0
Family Structure		
Nuclear	39	26.00
Joint	111	74.00
Total	150	100.0
Marriage Arranged by parents or not		
Yes	145	96.67
No.	5	3.33
Total	150	100.0

Table II. Distribution of respondents with regard to the following statements

Statement	Frequency	%
No. of Pregnancy		
1	29	19.33
2	36	24.00
3	37	24.67
4+	48	32.00
Total	150	100.0
Miscarriage or Abortion		
0	135	98.00
1	12	8.00
2	3	2.00
Total	150	100.0

Table III. In respondents view point how many children make ideal/small/large family

Family	No. of Children	Frequency	%
	4	41	27.3
	5	6	4.00
Large	6	56	37.3
	7	2	1.3
	8	20	13.3
	10+	25	16.7
	2	40	36.7
	3	20	13.3
Ideal	4	79	52.7
	5	6	4.00
	6	2	1.3
	7+	3	2.00
	2	133	88.7
Small	3	3	2.00
	4	14	9.3
Total		150	(100.0)

respect from in-laws family". About 60% respondents agreed to this statement that "male child guarantee old age security", while 40% disagreed. A huge majority (96.67%) of the respondents agreed that "family line continues with the male children" only 3.33% respondents disagreed. 48% respondents agreed that "no life without the male children" and majority (52%) respondents disagreed. Majority 58% respondents disagreed that "a woman feels natural pleasure after having a birth of male baby", while 42% agreed (Table IV).

The desire for sons is associated with low contraceptive prevalence (Zafar, 2002). About 22% of the respondents desired when she was pregnant that their coming baby would be a boy while 24% of the respondents desired for the girl and 54% of the respondents have no opinion. This survey showed that majority 79.33% of the respondents was in favor of use of family planning methods and 20.67% are not in favour. Majority (98%) had knowledge about contraceptive. Research findings revealed that 28.67% of the respondents were ever used the contraceptive method, whereas 71.33% of the respondents never used any such contraceptive method. A significant majority (88.37%) of the respondents was use condoms and any other method. The majority (45.79%) of the respondents reported that Islam did not allow using contraceptive for family planning, while only 5.61% of the respondents reported that their husband did not allow them to use contraceptive. A majority 90% of the respondents reported that family planning methods are good for a family's prosperity (Table V). 95.33% of the respondents reported that Islam disallows to use family planning methods, while 4% of the respondents reported that Islam allows and only 0.67%, were neutral (Table VI).

CONCLUSION

1. There is need to improve the socio economic conditions of the masses along with the special attain in female education enhancing age at marriage should also included in agenda of population strategies for achieving reduced population growth.
2. The information, education and communication program should not only encourage people to have fewer children, but also explicitly teach them to equally value female and male children.
3. The result of present study also showed that a change in attitude of our population is occurring. In order to make the family planning programme a success the Government has to put more effective measures for promoting family planning programme in the country. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a social action directed not only at getting greater acceptance of family limitation but also improving health status of the family.
4. Religion is a prime component of the culture, which has an implication on reproductive health. Therefore the role of religious leaders must be utilized positively through auctioning regarding convincing the masses for contraceptive use.

Table IV. Respondent's opinion about the following statements about son preference

Statements	Agree (%)	F	Disagree (%)	F	Total (%)	F
Better to be childless rather than to have female children	88(58.7)		62(41.3)		150(100)	
A family with more male children brings economic prosperity to the family	86(57.3)		64(43.7)		150(100)	
A woman with male children received great respect from in-laws family	72(48)		78(52)		150(100)	
Male child guarantee old age security	90(60)		60(40)		150(100)	
Family line continues with the male children	145(96.7)		5(3.33)		150(100)	
No life without the male children	72(48)		78(42)		150(100)	
A woman feels natural pleasure after having a birth of male baby	63(42)		87(58)		150(100)	

Table V. Respondent's Opinion about following statements

Statement	Frequency	%
Desire for		
Boy	33	22.00
Girl	36	24.00
No opinion	81	54.00
Total	150	100.0
Opinion about use of F.P		
Favorable	119	79.33
Unfavorable	31	20.67
Total	150	100.0
Knowledge about contracpt.		
Yes	147	98.00
No	3	2.00
Total	150	100.0
Use of contraception		
Ever used	43	28.67
Never used	107	71.33
Total	150	100
Use of diff. contraceptive		
Pills	3	5.98
Injections	2	4.65
Condoms & others	38	88.37
Total	43	100.0
Reasons for not using		
Religious	49	45.79
Side effect	30	28.09
Husbd.disallow	6	5.61
Any Other	22	20.56
Total	107	100.0
Family Planning methods are good for a family's prosperity		
Yes	135	90.00
No	15	10.00
Total	150	100.0

Table VI. Islam allows/disallows or neutral about family planning

Response	Frequency	%
Allows	6	4.00
Disallows	143	95.33
Neutral	1	0.67
Total	43	100.00

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