

## The relationship between religious orientation with intention of desired fertility and actual and desirable number of children in working women of Tehran, Iran

Marzieh Saei Gharenaz<sup>1</sup>, Giti Ozgoli<sup>2\*</sup>, Fahimeh Hajizadeh<sup>3</sup>, Zohre Sheikhan<sup>3</sup>, Malihe Nasiri<sup>4</sup>, Sharareh Jannesari<sup>3</sup>

1- Students Research Office, School Of Nursing and Midwifery Shahid Beheshti University Of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

2- Department of Midwifery & Reproductive health, School of Nursing & Midwifery, center for the Study of Religion and Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

3- Department of Midwifery & Reproductive health, School of Nursing & Midwifery Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

4- Department of Biostatistics, School Of Allied Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

\*Correspondence should be addressed to Mrs. Gita Ozgoli; Email: gozgoli@sbmu.ac.ir

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Given the significant importance of fertility and increase of working women in current situation of Iran, this study aimed to determine the relationship between religious orientations with the willingness to childbearing and actual and ideal number of children in employed women in Tehran.

**Materials & Methods:** In this cross-sectional study, 200 women employed in health centers and centers of education affiliated to Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran were selected by convenience sampling because more than two-thirds of working women in Iran work in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. In this study, women were selected inclusion criteria. Data collection instrument was a questionnaire containing demographic, religious orientation and reproductive behavior questions. Data analysis were performed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. In addition, significant level was considered 0.05. In this study, all relevant ethical issues were considered.

**Results:** In this study, the mean±SD age of subjects was 37.55±8.11 years. 57% of participants had a child or without children. The majority of samples (60.5%) have an excellent religious orientation. Mean±SD of the actual number and ideal number of children were 1.31±0.81 and 2.03±0.79, respectively and 21% of participants were willing to bear children in the future. There was a significant statistical correlation between the actual number and ideal number of children with religious orientation ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.14$ ), but there was no significant correlation between religious orientation and intend to childbearing ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results showed that religious orientation is cultural factors affecting the real and ideal number of children among employed women. Therefore, it is recommended to consider the cultural affairs based on the religious education in the family and planning and population policy.

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### Summary

**Background and Objectives:** Nowadays fertility and childbearing has been below the replacement level in

Iran and the willingness to have a child and have more children is decreasing in Iranian families. The fertility rate has reached 1.2 in 24 provinces of Iran (1). Spirituality causes the activation of responsibility in terms of a set of religious principles and beliefs having

physical effects. Spiritual practices enhance public health and therefore, they increase social interactions and provide social support as a source to promote physical health (2). According to the latest investigations, the dynamism of fertility patterns in Iran are based on three major cores of religion, ethnicity, economic, and social conditions (3). Changes in the values and attitudes of the society affect the decisions and fertility practices of individuals and families, especially women greatly during the past few decades. It is more possible for employed women to stop childbearing, having more alive children, and being at the end of the reproductive period (4). Regarding the mentioned cases, the objective of this study is to determine the relationship between religious orientation and the intention of childbearing and the current and ideal number of children according to women working in the hospitals affiliated to Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences.

**Materials and Methods:** In this cross-sectional study, 200 employed qualified women (since over two third (2/3) of employed women work at the Ministry of Education and centers affiliated to the Ministry of Health) were selected from the hospitals affiliated to Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and the selected centers of the Ministry of Education based on the available sampling. The questionnaire of demographic information, questions determining religious orientation and the behavior of fertility (including questions related to the intention of childbearing and the current and ideal number of children) were used to collect the data. The participants of this study include Iranian women living in Tehran being at the age of fertility working at the hospitals affiliated to Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and the selected centers of the Ministry of Education giving their consent to participate in this study. Religious orientation using the scale of measuring religious attitude (Golriz and Barahani, 1353). This likert scale includes 25 items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. According to the scale, the scores of religious orientation range from (100 to 76: Excellent, 75 to 51: Good, 50 to 26: Average, less than 25: poor). The validity of this questionnaire was 0.8 determined by the correlation coefficient using Allport, Vernon and Lindsey tests (5), and its reliability was determined in the previous studies (6). The data were analyzed through the statistical software of SPSS (Version 17) using descriptive statistics (frequency, the percentage of frequency, mean, standard deviation), and correlation.

**Results:** In this study, 57% of the participants had one child or they had no children, 39% had 2 children, and 4% had more than 2 children. Moreover, 74.5% of the research units used contraceptives. Most of the research units (60.5%) had an excellent religious orientation and 37% had a good religious orientation. Furthermore, 2% of them had an average religious orientation and 0.5% had a poor religious orientation.

The mean and standard deviation of the religious orientation were  $77.45 \pm 10.53$ , and the mean and

standard deviation of the current and ideal number of children were respectively  $1.31 \pm 0.81$  and  $2.03 \pm 0.79$ , and 21% of the participants had the intention to have a child. In Table 1, the mean and the standard deviation of the current and ideal number of children and the distribution of childbearing intention are reported based on some demographic characteristics. Based on the correlation, there was a significant statistical correlation between the number of current and ideal number of children and the score of religious orientation, ( $p < 0.05$ ), but there was not a significant relationship between the childbearing intention and religious orientation ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results of the present study indicate that there is a positive significant correlation between the religious orientation and the ideal number of children, but there is no statistically significant correlation between the childbearing intention and the religious orientation. In the present study, 60.7% of the employees did not wish to have children in the future which is in line with the study by Miri et al. . The results show that the employed women have other priorities other than having children in their family life (7). In addition, the study by Pejhan and Kamaliha (in Tehran) shows that there is a direct significant relationship between religious beliefs and the childbearing intention; as the religious beliefs increase the childbearing intention increases, too (8). Religious people have more children than non-religious people and it can be due to the fact that religious beliefs make people feel comfortable, strong and be hopeful about the future (9). In this study, the mean of the current and ideal number of children are 1.31 and 2.03 respectively, and only 21% of the women participating in the study intend to have children.

In the study by Nedushan et al., about the employed and unemployed women in Sanandaj, the mean of the ideal number of children for employed women was 2.19 and it is 2.29 for unemployed women (10). The results of this study showed that religious orientation is one of the factors affecting the current and ideal number of children for employed women; therefore, paying attention to religion-based cultural issues in family-based religious education, as well as planning and demographic policy-making is recommended.

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