

Examining Religious Attitudes and Reproductive Behavior among Women Visiting Health Centers of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Reproductive behavior is one of the crucial factors in population fluctuations. Decrease in fertility rate in Iran with the increasing median age in recent years, along with the aging population and shrinking young workforce are among major challenges of the future. Given the significance of the subject, this study aimed to determine the relationship between religious attitudes and reproductive behavior of women who visited health centers of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran 2016.

Method: This cross-sectional study included all women who went to health centers of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences. 200 of these women with inclusion criteria were selected via convenience sampling. A three-part questionnaire was used to collect data containing demographic information, religious attitudes, and reproductive behavior. To analyze the data, descriptive and analytical statistics were utilized. In this study, all the ethical issues were considered. Moreover, the authors declare no conflict of interest.

Results: The results showed that the mean \pm SD age of participants was 29.24 ± 1.6 . The mean \pm SD number family size, number of children, age at marriage, duration of marriage, the time between the age at marriage and the first pregnancy were 3.16 ± 0.79 , 1.8 ± 0.78 , 8.5 ± 5.9 years; 24.74 ± 24.79 months; and 21.02 ± 4.47 years, respectively. The results also demonstrated that the level of religious attitudes was good in majority of samples (67.5%). Analysis of variance indicated a significant relationship between different levels of religious attitude and reproductive behavior.

Conclusion: The findings of this study further corroborate the importance of religion in the reproductive behavior of people. It is recommended that when running educational programs, counseling be done in order to promote reproductive behavior. Besides, special attention should be given to the religious beliefs of individuals to foster these two important factors.

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Summary

Background and Objectives: Reproductive behavior

is not limited to giving birth to children, but rather, it includes other aspects such as interest in having children and considering incentives for fertility regulation (1). Over the recent decades, Iran has undergone numerous social, economic, and

demographic changes. As a result, reproductive behavior has also changed (2). The fertility rate in the country was 1.8 in 1390 (3). If the population continues as it is, the country will face a major challenge (4). There are several reasons in different countries for postponing childbearing such as continuing education, women's higher education, higher economic and social status, and job opportunities and economic factors (5). Religious tendency is a factor that affects the childbearing intention (6). Religion has a significant presence in various aspects of human life (7). The need for religion is one of the most basic human needs (8). An analytical study showed that in Muslim communities, the fertility rate is higher, the use of contraceptives is less, and marriage age is lower (9). In today's materialistic life, spiritual values have faded (10). Over the past few decades, fertility rate among Iranian families has been affected by changes in values and attitudes in the society (11). Women's tendency towards childbearing is deeply affected by the state of religion in their childhood (12).

Fertility, as the most important determinant factor in demographic fluctuations, has attracted considerable attention in population studies (13). In Iran, most of the studies have been on the area of fertility, the behaviors associated with it, and its consequences on demographic and structural factors (4, 10, 14-17). Given the great importance of Fertility Transition in Iran, this study aimed to determine the status of religious attitudes and reproductive behavior among women visiting health centers affiliated with Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in 1395.

Method: In this cross-sectional study, following the sampling used by Soroush & et al, (2014) (21), 200 women who referred to hospitals affiliated to Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences were selected using random sampling. The questionnaire of demographic information, the behavior of fertility (including questions related to the intention of childbearing, child gender preference, the current and ideal number of children) (18) and questions determining religious orientation were used to collect the data. The religious orientation questionnaire (Golriz and Barahani, 1353) is on a likert scale with 25 items. According to the scale, the scores of religious orientation range from (< 25: poor, 50 - 26: medium, 75 - 51: Good, 100 - 76: Excellent). The validity of this questionnaire was 0.8 determined by the correlation (19), and its reliability had been determined in the previous studies. The data were analyzed using the statistical software of SPSS (Version 17). Independent T-test and ANOVA were performed.

Results: In this study the mean and standard deviation of the participants' age was 29.24 ± 1.6 . The mean and standard deviation of the family member, children number, marriage age, marital duration, and the space between the marriage time and first pregnancy were 3.16 ± 0.79 , 1.8 ± 0.78 , 8.5 ± 0.59 , 24.74 ± 24.39 years, and 21.02 ± 4.74 month, respectively. Most of the research units (67.5%) had a good religious intention. The mean and standard deviation of religious score and

reproductive score were 71.17 ± 9.35 , 11.04 ± 1.15 , respectively. The results of ANOVA indicated a significant relationship between different levels of religious attitudes and reproductive behavior.

Conclusion: The results of the present study showed that the majority of participants' religious attitudes were at a good level; besides, there was a significant relationship between religious attitude and reproductive behavior. In the study by kalantari & et al, there was a positive correlation between childbearing intention and religious orientation (10). Similarly, Pilten & et al found that there was a significant correlation between religiosity and desire to childbearing (20). In another study, it was concluded that religiosity plays a minor role in determining the number of children (21). Religiosity helps individuals adopt a purposeful attitude toward the entire universe (22). Moreover, World Health Organization highlights the role of spiritual dimension of human in his development when defining different dimensions of human existence (23). Childbearing also plays an important role in strengthening the family (24). In this study, the mean and standard deviation for the family member was 3.16, for children number was 1.8, and for marriage age was 21.02 years. However, the average number of children in Shiraz was 4.56 (25).

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