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FERTILITY PREFERENCES AMONG WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY

1. **RAHEEL SIKANDAR**
2. **RAJABALI KHWAJA**
3. **FOUZIA SHAIKH**
4. **NASREEN JATOI**

1 ***Associate Professor***
Department of Gynae & Obstetric
Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Sindh.

2 ***Consultant Family Physicians***
King Saud Hospital SA

3 ***Assistant Professor***
Department of Gynae & Obstetric
Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Sindh.

4 ***Associate Professor***
Department of Gynae & Obstetric
Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Sindh.

corresponding Author
RAHEEL SIKANDAR
Associate Professor
Department of Gynae & Obstetric
Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Sindh.
contact: 03009371098
email: raheel.sikandar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Objectives: To determine fertility preferences with reasons among Pakistani women of reproductive age.

Methods : A questionnaire based survey was conducted among 200 married women coming to OBGYN department of Liaquat university hospital Hyderabad, Sindh during the period of September to December 2009.The administered questionnaire served to find the demographic characteristics of women , desired family size and reason for this preference. Ethical consideration and confidentiality was ensured. The data entry, processing and analysis were done using SPSS soft ware No.15

Sample Size: 200 women of reproductive age

Results : The mean age of the sample was 29.65±4.92 years. No formal education was attained by 87(43.5%) women and, monthly income less than 10000 was seen in 153(76.5%) with 141 (70.5%) women living in joint family units. One hundred and fourteen (57%) women belonged urban areas of Hyderabad.(Table I) When questioned about desired family size 79(39.5%) responded they want 4 children and only36 (18%) wanted 2. On asking reason for particular size of the family 84(42%) women answered they just like it that way with out any reason .Table II

Conclusion: Nearly 60% (39.5% want4 children and 21.5%more than 4) of women prefer 4 children in their homes. And 42% of these do so because they like it with out any objective reason. Children born and socialized in these families will perceive it normal family and less likely to turn to contraception willingly.

Key Words: Desired family size, Ideal family, Fertility preference,Contraception.

INTRODUCTION

The population policy of Pakistan aims at achieving population stabilization in 2020, and it meant to do so by reducing the annual growth rate from 1.9% to 1.3% and total fertility rate at 2.1[1]

The high rate of population growth affects the country adversely in matters of health, socio-economically, and also has demographic implications. One serious problem is heavy population pressure in rural areas with shrunken resources and a resultant increase in pressure on urban areas.

Pakistan, has one of oldest governmental programme, supporting family planning [2] but Pakistan reproductive health and family planning survey 2000-2001reveal total fertility rate to be 4.8 and contraceptive prevalence only 20%. [3] In 2004, Pakistan had lower contraceptive use than most other Muslim countries[4]. Most authors have suggested that in spite of some methodological problems affecting comparability the available data can only be interpreted as no substantial change in fertility in Pakistan .[5,6]

A slow decline of total fertility rate may be because population has not reached their desired family size.[7,8] Unmet need for contraception remained center of many population policies around the globe and also includes Pakistan. Researchers have neglected to investigate “population’s desire” for a particular family size and policy makers have

failed to design careful and targeted communication in this regard. One such study conducted at Karachi revealed that after having 4-5 children 91-94% women expressed to have reached their desired family size.[9] we believe modification in family preference integrated with increased contraceptive prevalence is the key to solve the problem of population explosion. In this regard as first step we designed this observational study to determine fertility preference among married women coming to OBGYN clinics for any reason

OBJECTIVE:-

To determine fertility preferences, and the reason behind these, among Pakistani women of reproductive age group.

METHODS:-

A cross sectional study was carried out among 200 women attending OBGYN department at Liaquat university hospital during the period of September to December 2009. Convenient Sampling was employed and all married women from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances were included in this study. The study was conducted on two 2 paged questionnaires in English. Ist part of the questionnaire was regarding demographic characteristics of women, where as second part contained direct closed end questions about their desired number of children or ideal family size, and the reasons for preference. These were divided into no reasons (just like it this way) , sex composition of family, economic helping hands and religious beliefs . The pre tested questionnaires were filled through face to face interview; three post graduates were assigned to take interview along with principal investigator after one hour of classroom training and practical demonstration of interview. Data was analyzed on SPSS 15 software using descriptive statistics like frequencies, means and ratios.

RESULTS:-

The respondents age ranged from 20-45 years with mean age as29.65±4.92 years. No formal education was seen in 87(43.5%) women, five years of schooling was seen in 64 (32%) ,eight years schooling was taken by35 (17.5%) where as 08(4%) and 06(3%) were respectively graduates and professionals. Monthly income of the family less than 10000 was seen in 153(76.5%) of women, with141 (70.5%) living in joint family units. One hundred and fourteen (57%) women belonged to urban areas of Hyderabad and 86 (43%) women had rural background.(Table I) When questioned about ideal family size they desire 79(39.5%) responded they want 4 children and 43(21.5 %) wanted more than 4 children Only36 (18%) wanted 2.On asking reason for particular size of the family 84(42%) women answered they just like it that way with out any reason .Table II. Women empowerment as a secondary finding in this study sample is identified by education status ,family income, working status ,refusal to have sex during fertile period and urbanization and its relation to ideal family size for the country is sought.(Table III).The desire of two child per couple does not seem to be facilitated by education, working status or living in urban areas .These indicators do have a positive correlation with contraceptive prevalence and birth spacing but failed to affect desired family size.

DISCUSSION:-

There exists a conscious choice of reproductive goals among

TABLE-I
DEMOGRAPHICS FEATURES OF WOMEN

Age groups	**N(%)**
20-25	47(23.5%)
26-30	89(44.5%)
31-35	45(22.5%)
36-40	14(7%)
>40	5(2.5%)
Education	
No formal education	87(43.5%)
Primary	64 (32%)
Secondary	35(17.5%)
College	08(04%)
Professional	06(03%)
Income	
<10,000	153(76.5%)
>10,000	47(23.5%)
Area	
Urban	114(57%)
Rural	86(43%)
Parity	**N=200**
0	4(2%)
1	46(22.6%)
2	29(14.2%)
3	44(21.6%)
4	30(14.7%)
5	24(11.8%)
6	7(3.4%)
7	9(4.4%)
8	5(2.5%)
9	2(1%)

TABLE-II
FAMILY PREFERENCES

Desired children	**N=200**
2	36(18%)
3	42(21%)
4	79(39.5%)
5	25(12%)
>5	18(9%)
Reason for particular family size	**N=200**
No reason	84(42%)
Children needed as helping hands	63(31.5%)
Sex composition of family require boy/girl	39 (19.5%)
Religion does'nt allow contraception	14(7%)

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS WHOSE DESIRABLE FAMILY SIZE WAS 2
N=36
TABLE III

Education	urbanization	Employment	income	Refuse sex
Professional (1)2.7%	Urban (14)38.8%	Employed (7)19.4%	>10000 (6)	Yes 24 (66.7)
12years (4)11%	Rural (22)61.1%	Unemployed (29)80.5%	<10000 (30)	No12 (33.3)
8years(7) 19.4%				
5years(12) 33.3%				
No formal education (12)33.3%				

married couples and this should determine the fertility rate of a population. This study was conducted to determine desired family size or fertility preference of an ordinary Pakistani woman of reproductive age .Only 18% women wanting two 2 children reflected in contraceptive prevalence of the country. A desired number of children as 4 and more than 4, respectively by 39.5%and 21.5% women in this study is alarming and reflects the gap between policy makers and population's thinking. Although fertility rate has decreased from7 to its present level of 4 but this reduction is negligible. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country of the world with a population of 180 million and annual growth rate of 1.98. [10,11,12] Evaluation of past family planning activities in Pakistan indicates that the impact of the program on the birth rate has been minimal. As 6th most populous country of the world, Pakistan is facing all the problems of population overgrowth including poor quality of life and deteriorating health of an average Pakistani. Although a large majority of married women know about family planning methods but these are practiced by only few fertile couples .[13]Contraceptive education alone has failed to produce any significant effect on total fertility rate as concluded in a Cochrane review.[14]

The desired family size is among strong predictors of the number of children born to women.[15] Last two Population surveys in Pakistan failed to show significant change in these expressed choices over time for the last twenty years as shown by Soomro in their research.[7] The reasons for a particular size of family have been reported in literature as, the affordability, family's sexual composition [16,17], more children to work for sharing the economic burden, and religion that doesn't allow contraception.

A very interesting observation made in this study was that 42%(Table II) of women just wanted a particular family size without any reason or serious thinking. Numeracy about children appeared historically in various times and places, and that the conceptualization of family size was a necessary condition for adopting family limitation. [8] Identification of this group of women from this study may guide the policy makers to emphasize targeted modification in contraceptive counseling. Because this group has got no solid reason for a particular family size, they are vulnerable to adopt the concept of small family. All policy interventions rely on changing the behaviors, so different perspectives of human nature imply different types of policies. It is of interest to explore the representations of professionals who give advice on contraception, since their views could have an impact on contraceptive use.[18]Health care providers should be attentive to the existence of variation in preferences in decision making across health domains. Contraceptive providers should proactively assess decisional preferences to ensure the most appropriate counseling is provided to each individual[19]. Husband's role and his education in deciding the family size could be explored and this aspect can be considered as a major limitation in this study[20].

Conclusion.

Ordinary Pakistani women still has large family preference. Nearly 60% (39.5% want4 children and 21.5%more than 4) of women prefer 4 children in their homes. And 42% of these do so because they like it with out any objective reason. Although the ultimately expected number of children is the accurate measure of fertility, the desire for4 children by most participants determine the personal norm of our women. This could be among the reasons for low contraceptive prevalence in our society. Children born and socialized in these families will perceive it normal family and less likely to turn to contraception in future.

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CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PREFERENCES AT LUH

Reg # Address

Age———Parity————Working status——working——— notworking——

Family income—— <10,000 ———— >10000————

Living in single family unit———— Joint family ————

Have you ever attended school for

Never ——-

5year———-

8year————

10year————-

Graduation————

Professional————

What is your ideal or preferred family size	<2 ,3, 4, 5, >5
You prefer this size because you think	
Children will share the economic burden	Yes— No—-
Religion stops you from planning the size of family	Yes—No—-
Your family composition require child of particular gender	Yes—No—-
You just like this number of children without any reason	Yes—No—-
Have you ever heard of contraception	Yes—No—-

How did you come to know about contraception through

Media—-

Relatives/friends —-

Health worker——-

Doctor ——

Were you told about emergency contraception?	Yes—No—-
Do you know when to use it	Yes—No—-
Have you ever heard of IUCD as emergency contraceptive?	Yes—No—
Have you ever used/using contraception?	Yes—No—-
Were all your pregnancies wanted ones?	Yes—No—
Were all your pregnancies planned ?	Yes—No—-
Have you ever had an unplanned pregnancy?	Yes—No—-
Did you try to get rid of it?	Yes—No—-
Have you ever attempt an abortion?	Yes—No—-
Have you used any medicine to get rid of pregnancy?	Yes—No—-
Are you aware of safe and fertile periods of your reproductive cycle	Yes—No—-
Can you discuss this with your husband	Yes—No—-
Can you refuse sex during fertile days	Yes—No—-