



# Islamic Guidelines in Promoting Fertility: A Narrative Review

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### ABSTRACT

Population is most important asset in each country. Fertility is one of the main issues in demography. It is also an important element of population growth during recent years. Iran's population has been experiencing important changes in its age structure due to the continuous decline in fertility. Presently, Iran is one of the countries that has low fertility rates. These changes, on the one hand, bear substantial considerations in terms of economic, social, policy and planning making and planning strategies, on the other hand religious government cannot stay indifferent to the religious priorities in the social, economic and family planning, thus, statesmen need to be aware of this phenomenon. This study intends to introduce Quranic guidelines and Islamic traditions concerned with fertility. In this narrative review, documents without a time limit and using the keywords Quran, Fertility, Population, Islam and Iran, alone or in combination in the alone or in combination in the Persian and English databases were searched. Also fully reviewed all 114 Surahs and other religious sources to find the verses and narrations and hadiths specifically referring to the fertility. The documents were summarized and critiqued. In Quran, there are various verses which point to infertility and human reproduction. in Surahs Al-Shura, Al-Nuh, Al-Nour, Al-Anam, Al-Nisa, Al-Tawbah, Al-Ahzab, Al-Baqarah, Al-Qiyamat, Al-Tariq, Al-Fatir, Al-Qasas, Al-Momen, Al-Ra'd, Al-Anbiya, Al-Talaq, Al-Imran, Al-An'am, Al-Isra, Al-Mursalat. Since being ignorant to the issue of fertility in the current situation in Iran can lead to a decrease in political, social, and economic power, it is rational to pay special attention to fertility based on the mentioned cases, and especially, the importance of the concept of fertility in the Quran and Islamic sources.

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## Introduction

The population of any country is the most important asset of that country (1-4). Demographic change and its role in labor supply, and as a result, in production growth, can play a significant role in the socio-economic growth and development of any country. One of the most important factors af

fecting demographic changes is the alteration of the fertility rate, which itself strongly influences the supply of labor (5, 6).

According to the report of the United Nations in 2017 regarding the World Population Prospects, almost half of the world's population live

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in countries with fertility below the succession level (7). In Iran, one of the most important changes has been the rapid decline in fertility and the spread of this trend to all provinces and urban and rural areas (8). Total fertility has decreased from 7 births per woman in 1979 to 1.9 births in 2006, 1.8 births in 2011, 2.01 births in 2016, and 1.65 in 2020, which shows a sharp decline in fertility in Iran over the past decades (9,10).

Moreover, the proportion of the elderly population (65 years and older) has risen from 3% in 1986 to 4.4% in 1996, 5.2% in 2006, 5.7% in 2011, and 9.28% in 2016. According to the forecasts, by the end of 2030, Iran's population will reach 90 million and the population of people aged 40 years and above will be about 26 million and 200 thousand people with a growth of 108%, meaning that 1 out of every 3 people will be in this age group (11, 12). The population of Iran in recent years, following a continuous decline in fertility, is experiencing fundamental changes in its age structure.

The fertility rate in Iran has been declining since the second half of the 1980s, and now it is one of the countries with the lowest fertility rate (13-15).

This issue poses challenges to the country, such as declined working-age population, aging, and negative population growth, and has important economic and social considerations in terms of policy and planning (16-19).

The issue of population decline and aging, as a result of the policy of generational limitation in recent years, is now emerging as a fundamental and serious problem. An Islamic society cannot be indifferent to religious priorities in the design of social, economic, and familial issues, and knowledge of what is stated in religious texts is a necessity (20, 21). Therefore, regarding fertility, it is highly important to pay attention to the religious approach to this phenomenon and be aware of it. This issue of fertility has been raised in various verses and hadiths in different ways.

This study aimed to get acquainted with the guidelines of the Holy Quran and Islamic traditions in the field of fertility and use these guidelines practically in promoting fertility in Iran. Fertility has always been considered by various religions and sects since this concept depends on the survival and permanence of those religions and is effective in the growth and survival of ideas (22). In other words, each segment of the population can play a special role in building and managing society, moving the wheels of production, and protecting and enriching cultural heritage and passing it on to the next generation. As a result, the followers of religions have been encouraged to increase fertility (22, 23). This study was conducted with the aim of Islamic guidelines in promoting fertility.

## Materials and Methods

In this narrative review, documents without a time limit and using the keywords Quran, Fertility, Population, Islam and Iran, alone or in combination in the alone or in combination in the Persian and English databases were searched. Also fully reviewed all 114 Surahs and other religious sources to find the verses and narrations and hadiths specifically referring to the fertility. The documents were summarized and critiqued.

## Result

There are rules and regulations about fertility in numerous religious books. In Islam, there are moral recommendations and jurisprudential instructions regarding marriage, fertility, procreation, and filicide prohibition, and numerous verses in the Holy Quran have addressed these issues.

Surah Al-Nour [verse 32] "Marry off those who are single among you, and the upright among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace, and Allah is all-bounteous, all-knowing".

Al-Shoura [verse 11] "The originator of the heavens and the earth, He made for you mates from your own selves, and mates of the cattle, by which means He multiplies you. Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing".

Al-Nouh [verse 31] "Do not kill your children for the fear of penury: We will provide for them and for you. Killing them is indeed a great iniquity".

Al-Anam [verse 151] "Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; we will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allāh has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason"

There are other verses in the Holy Quran that directly or indirectly refer to the subject of fertility and childbirth, such as Surah Al- Nisa [verse 25], Surah Al- Tawbah [verse 15, 69], Surah Al- Ahzab [verse 50], Surah Al- Baqarah [verse 230, 232, 49], Surah Al- Qiyamat [verse 37-39], Surah Al- Tariq [verse 5-7], Surah Al- Fatir [verse 11], Surah Al- Qasas [verse 9], Surah Al- Momen [verse 67], Surah Al- Ra'd [verse 23], Surah Al- Anbiya [verse 89-91], Surah Al- Talaq [verse 6], Surah Al- Al-Imran [verse 67, 39-40], Surah Al- An'am [verse 151], Surah Al- Isra [verse 6, 31], Surah Al- Mursalat [verse 25-26] (24).

In most verses of the Quran, the issue of reproduction and survival of human beings on the planet has been introduced as the main purpose of marriage. However, in the verses of the Quran,

other purposes have been mentioned, such as the following:

#### **a. Extinguish the instinct of lust**

Al- Muminun [verse 5, 6] "Who guard their privates, except with their wives and what their right hand possess, and then they are not blamed.

In this verse, the correct way to extinguish the lust of sexual intercourse with the spouse is known, which is done only through marriage.

#### **b. Need for calm and tranquility**

Al- Room [verse 21] "And of His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves that you might reside with them, and has put kindness and mercy between you. Surely, there are signs in this for those who think"

This verse is used that comfort and tranquility is one of the important results that arise after marriage between spouses. Truth is the law of creation that has made man and woman seek each other and be interested in each other; but it is not from the kind of interest that man has in things and arises from selfishness. Marriage love means that each couple wants the other to be happy and comfortable and enjoys forgiveness and sacrifice about the spouse.

#### **c. Survival and reproduction of generation**

Al- Nahl [verse 72] "Allah has given you wives from among yourselves, and has given you and your wives, sons and grandsons and He has provided you with good things. What, do they believe in vanity; do they disbelieve in the favor of Allah?"

Al-Shoura [verse 11] "The Originator of the heavens and the earth, He has given you from yourselves, pairs, and also pairs of cattle, thereby multiplying you. There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearer, the Seer"

In this verse, the issue of survival and reproduction of generation is clearly considered as the purpose of marriage.

From all the above verses, it is concluded that the purpose of marriage is not only to "extinguish the instinct of lust", but there are more important and transcendent goals in marriage, which are: "the emergence of peace and tranquility" and "survival and reproduction of generation".

In Islamic resources, one of the important purposes of forming a family is the issue of "reproduction of generations". This issue is logically and directly related to "promoting pregnancy". In other words, since "reproduction of generations" will not be possible regardless to "promoting pregnancy", logically, wherever "reproduction of generations" is commanded in religious teachings, the issue of "promoting pregnancy" will have a rational and

logical connotation. Performing marriage is one of the traditions emphasized by Islam, although be associated with poverty and deprivation; because God has promised that in case of marriage, He will make the man and woman needless of His grace. Of course, it should be noted that making needless does not mean making people rich; rather, it means that they do not need to depend on others for the basic necessities of life.

It should also be noted that the effect of temporal and spatial requirements has wide meanings and examples in the rules of jurisprudence. What is clear is that none of the contemporary imitation authorities have not only considered the issue of "reproduction of generation" and "population increase" as contrary to the requirements of time and place in the current situation, but have also emphasized its acceptance.

Furthermore, in Islamic resources, having children is one of the most important effects and motives of marriage, and even a man and a woman can mention "Estilad" (the possibility of fertilization and fertility) in the marriage contract. There are also various narrations and hadiths from Infallibles and great religious figures about fertility, the virtue of having children, and increasing the population of Muslim communities (25).

Sheikh Al-Hurr Al-Amili narrated from Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni with a document attached to him from Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (A.S.) that: "The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Marry virgin girls who have the ability to give birth and do not marry a beautiful woman who is barren since I will be proud of you, the people of my ummah, rather than the other ummahs on the Day of Judgment." It is narrated from Al-Shaykh al-Saduq with his documents from Imam Mohammad Al-Baqir (A.S.) that: "The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "In Islam, no building block of life is more beloved in the sight of God Almighty than marriage" (26).

He also mentioned in his book, Al-Khisal, in the hadith of Arba'amat from Imam Ali (A.S.) that: "Marry because marriage is the tradition of the Messenger of God (PBUH) since he used to say: "Whoever wants to follow my tradition should know that one of my traditions is marriage, and seek to have children because I want to increase the number of people in my ummah be more than that in the other ummahs on the Day of Judgment" (26).

## **Discussion**

In Islam, in numerous verses and hadiths, some issues have been raised that each of which is related to fertility in some way. Regarding this, in Quranic verses and hadiths, people are highly recommended to get married and leave celibacy. One of the consequences of marriage in most cases is the reproduc-

tion and possibly multiplication of generations. In some hadiths, marriage is recommended for the purpose of procreation (27).

One of the important philosophies of Islam allowing men to marry one to four women and permitting temporary marriages is to give birth and increase the generation. In other words, the wisdom and philosophy of marriage is the creation and continuation of a generation (4). There are also verses and hadiths mentioning the increase of the Muslim population as an important criterion both in this world and in the Hereafter. In this world, children have been introduced as adornment, a source of help, relief, power, and a source of victory for believers; on the other hand, filicide and refusal to have children due to fear of poverty has been condemned (24, 26, 27).

In general, the findings of this article indicated that in Islamic religious sources, attention has been paid to marriage and its underlying factors and the issue of fertility and increasing fertility, while population decline has been disapproved. Also what can be deduced from most Islamic verses and hadiths is that the purpose of "marriage and reproduction of marriage" is to increase the number of Muslims. Obviously, this goal is not limited to the borders of one or more Islamic countries, but extends to the entire territory of Muslim nations. It is clear that assuming that the Muslim population increases in the world, their power will increase and this will lead to many benefits.

Increasing fertility rates are necessary to achieve sustainable development. However, in Iran, fertility has decreased significantly in recent years, and this country is now one of the countries with low fertility rates. Decreased fertility not only affects the country's demographic structure but also has other consequences. If Iran does not limit the declining trend of population growth, in the next few years, in addition to a dangerous decrease in population, it will face the problem of population aging, which will cause various economic and social consequences for the country.

## Conclusion

Since being ignorant to the issue of fertility in the current situation in Iran can lead to a decrease in political, social, and economic power, it is rational to pay special attention to fertility based on the mentioned cases, and especially, the importance of the concept of fertility in the Quran and Islamic sources.

## Conflict of interest

Authors declare that have no competing interest.

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