University of Hormozgan

Iranian Journal of Educational Research

Print ISSN: 1735 - 563X Online ISSN: 2980 - 874X

Homepage: http://ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir

Educational and Behavioral Research Center

Presenting a Model of Childbearing Intention Based on Demographic Factors and Personality Traits in Couples

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Article Info

Article type:

Research Article

Article history:

Received 18 Jan. 2025

Received in revised form 19 Feb. 2025

Accepted 23 Mar. 2025

Published online 01 Jun. 2025

Keywords:

Demographic variables,
Religiosity,
Intention to have children,
Personality traits

ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of the present study was to elucidate a model of childbearing predicated on demographic variables and personality characteristics, emphasizing the role of religiosity among married partners.

Methods: This investigation is characterized as descriptive-survey in relation to its practical objectives and methodologies for data acquisition. The statistical population encompassed all married individuals residing in the city of Khomein during the year 2024, from which a sample of 232 participants was extracted utilizing a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through Glock and Stark's religiosity scale and a personality traits inventory. Analytical procedures were performed using SPSS version 22 and PLS version 4 software.

Results: The findings indicated that childbearing exerts a significant influence on religiosity and personality traits, with this relationship being reinforced both directly and indirectly through the mediation of religiosity. Furthermore, religiosity positively impacts personality traits. Additionally, the results revealed that demographic factors do not significantly affect childbearing.

Conclusions: In light of the research findings, it is reasonable to conclude that religious values and personality traits constitute influential factors concerning the intention to procreate, and enhancing these variables may effectively augment the propensity to have children.

Cite this article: Fathi, H., Heidari, H. & Davudi, H. (2025). Presenting a model of childbearing intention based on demographic factors and personality traits in couples. *Iranian Journal of Educational Research*, 4 (2), 1-17.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/4.2.1

Publisher: University of Hormozgan.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/4.2.1

Introduction

In today's world, issues related to family life decisions—particularly the intention to have children—significantly influence the structure of families. Examining these decisions and identifying the underlying factors facilitates the enhancement of awareness in various social and psychological domains (Heywood et al., 2016). Among countries that have undergone demographic transitions, Iran stands out for its rapid decline in fertility rates. Since 2006, fertility rates have fallen below replacement level (2.1 children), reaching an estimated total fertility rate of 1.8 by 2011. Currently, most provinces in the country report fertility rates below the replacement threshold (Rammohan & Johar, 2009).

One consequence of the spread of new values is the shift in childbearing attitudes and intentions. A distinction exists between desire and intention regarding childbearing: while desire is grounded in personal emotions, intention includes a commitment to action and is often shaped by one's circumstances (Zarei et al., 2025). The desire to have children has considerable effects—both direct and indirect—on final family size. Thus, desire and intention are conceptually and practically distinct. These differences not only relate to external social and economic constraints but also involve internal factors, such as individuals' personal decisions about fertility behavior (Akram et al., 2020).

Despite its importance, few population studies have explored religious beliefs as a factor influencing fertility changes. Religion, as a cultural factor, impacts fertility through its influence on norms concerning family size, the number of children, age at marriage, and more. In traditional societies, religion has always played a significant role in shaping values across various spheres of social life, guiding them according to religious principles (Vogl & Freese, 2020).

Spirituality and religiosity, while distinct, are intertwined concepts that complement each other in Islam. Religious teachings encompass all human needs on earth, guiding individuals toward eternal life and ultimate salvation (Nazim, 2015). The decline in fertility desire and changing behaviors and ideals among women not only impacts population growth rates but also alters the composition and structure of society. Today, the decreasing desire for childbearing, delayed marriage, and increasing average age of marriage are considered pressing social issues in Iran (Hosseini & Bagi, 2014). In general, religiosity can serve as a mediating factor in determining fertility intentions among married men and women (Amini et al., 2022). Akram et al. (2020) demonstrated that

Bangladesh experienced a significant fertility decline, and religiosity served as a mediator between demographic factors and fertility intentions. Research shows that religious individuals often maintain strong connections with God and religious values, which can mediate the influence of positive personality traits—such as confidence, honesty, and empathy—on fertility intentions.

Fertility intention, as a key decision in reproductive behavior, is influenced by numerous economic, social, and psychological factors. This intention—referring to the desire to have children in the future—is shaped not only by economic conditions and government support but also by attitudes, psychological motivations, and individual perceptions (Behjati-Ardakani et al., 2017).

Various studies have indicated that fertility intention is associated with personality traits such as courage, fairness, egalitarianism, and introversion. For instance, courageous and fair individuals are more inclined toward childbearing due to their sense of responsibility and fairness, while introverted individuals, who prefer social isolation, tend to avoid interactions and show less interest in childbearing (Diener & Lucas, 2019).

Personality traits refer to the enduring characteristics and behavioral patterns of individuals over time, which can be defined through various personality models (Bukhari et al., 2023). According to Durkheim, religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices concerning the sacred, uniting all followers into a single moral community, referred to as a "church" (Durkheim, 2016). In a general sense, religiosity involves religious commitment that influences an individual's attitudes, tendencies, and behaviors (Hasbiyallah et al., 2019).

Dimensions of religiosity, as defined by Clayton and Gladden (1974), include: ritualistic dimension involving religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and participation in religious ceremonies, experiential dimension encompassing emotional experiences and perceptions of a connection with a divine being or ultimate reality, ideological/intellectual dimension comprising knowledge and understanding of the core beliefs of a religion and consequential dimension referring to the influence of religious beliefs and practices on daily life and behavior.

Religious and demographic characteristics can act as mediating variables in fertility decision-making. In the domain of religiosity, various aspects—such as religious rituals, emotions, knowledge, and outcomes—can influence fertility desires by strengthening family cohesion and religious values. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education,

employment status, and income level also play a significant role in shaping fertility preferences. For example, higher education and income can enhance financial stability and create more favorable conditions for childbearing.

Fertility intention is a key determinant in population growth and national demographic policy, influenced by personal, economic, social, and cultural factors. Multiple studies confirm that religiosity, personality traits, family support, and economic conditions significantly affect individuals' childbearing intentions.

Amini et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between responsibility and religious orientation with fertility intention among women attending comprehensive health centers in Yasuj. They found a positive relationship between responsibility and fertility intention, but religious orientation was not significantly related. Additionally, factors such as age, length of marriage, and the number of children influenced men's fertility intentions. The study recommended encouraging childbearing at younger ages.

Kaveh Firouz et al. (2021) conducted a study among married women in Tehran and found that religiosity and family values significantly impacted women's attitudes and desires toward childbearing. In contrast, socioeconomic status did not significantly influence fertility intentions. This study highlights the role of family values and religiosity as influential sociocultural factors.

Torabi and sheidani (2019) studied factors associated with the "desire for fewer children" in Tehran, identifying the emphasis on personal freedom and individual independence, as well as challenges in balancing household responsibilities and childcare, as key determinants in reduced childbearing desire.

Saei et al. (2017) examined the relationship between religious orientation and fertility desire and ideal number of children among working women in Tehran. The study showed that religious orientation was significantly associated with both the actual and desired number of children.

Chen et al. (2023), in a study in China, investigated the intention to have a second or third child under the three-child policy. The findings indicated that families with one child were more inclined to have a second child, while those with two children were less likely to pursue a third. Various factors such as gender, age, place of residence, and child support influenced fertility desire.

In another Chinese study, Xing et al. (2022) explored the impact of health insurance on fertility intentions among rural populations, finding a positive relationship between participation in the health insurance system and fertility intentions.

Heywood et al. (2016), examining Shanghai-based couples, identified factors influencing the intention to have a second or third child, including parental age, child-related expenses, and educational barriers. The study also emphasized the positive influence of governmental fertility encouragement policies.

Understanding how fertility intentions are associated with personality traits and religiosity among married individuals is a complex and multifaceted research topic. This area is of great importance as it aids in a deeper understanding of the factors influencing fertility intentions and related behaviors in society. Studies have shown that personality traits such as confidence, independence, creativity, and adaptability significantly affect fertility intentions. This study seeks to answer the central question: Is there a relationship between fertility intentions and demographic and personality traits, with a focus on the mediating role of religiosity, among married couples in the city of Khomein?

The present study aims to comprehensively examine and analyze these factors within a structural model to better understand their impact on fertility intentions. By focusing on psychological and social dimensions, this research seeks to propose a novel framework for understanding couples' childbearing decisions, thereby contributing to the enrichment of existing research in this field. Religiosity is positioned as a mediating factor between fertility intention and personality traits, influencing the relationship between individual characteristics and the decision to have children.

Material and Methods

The present study is correlational research that investigates the relationships among variables. Based on its objective, this study is considered applied research. In terms of method, it is descriptive and survey-based in nature.

The statistical population consisted of all married men and women in the city of Khomein in the year 2024. Due to the lack of precise information on the population size, Cochran’s formula for an infinite population was applied, resulting in a sample size of 384 participants (men and women combined). A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed and collected, from which 323 complete

questionnaires were entered into the data analysis phase. However, according to the "rule of thumb", a sample size of 315 would have been sufficient. The sampling method was simple random sampling.

Data collection instruments consisted of two standardized questionnaires whose validity and reliability had been confirmed in previous studies. Initially, the validity and reliability of the instruments were re-examined. For assessing validity, face validity and qualitative validation techniques were utilized. After validation by subject matter experts, the reliability of the questionnaires was assessed. For this purpose, 30 preliminary questionnaires were distributed among the statistical population, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each variable and its associated indicators. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha values for the primary variables and their respective indicators exceeded the critical threshold of 0.70. Following the confirmation of validity and reliability, the data collection process proceeded.

For gathering background literature, a library research method was used, including books, academic theses, internet-based articles, and other relevant sources. For field data collection to assess the variables, a questionnaire-based survey was employed.

Instruments

Glock and Stark's Religiosity Questionnaire: This instrument was developed by Clayton and Gladden (1974) to measure religious attitudes and beliefs. It has been standardized in various countries across Europe, America, Africa, and Asia, and has been adapted for followers of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The instrument assesses religiosity across five dimensions: ideological, emotional, consequential, ritualistic, and intellectual. However, in the current study, only four dimensions were employed, with the intellectual dimension omitted due to extensive religious propaganda in Iran.

The questionnaire consists of 26 items covering four dimensions: ideological (7 items), emotional (6 items), consequential (6 items), and ritualistic (7 items). The instrument has demonstrated high validity across various studies involving diverse samples. In its most recent application among university students, the overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.83. Furthermore, the reliability values for each dimension were: ideological ($\alpha = 0.81$), emotional ($\alpha = 0.75$), consequential ($\alpha = 0.72$), and ritualistic ($\alpha = 0.83$).

Personality Traits Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Bass and Valenzi (1980) and consists of 27 items across four dimensions. The items are rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The obtained Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire was 0.74.

The Bass et al. Personality Traits Questionnaire evaluates four personality types:

- Fair (Items 1–11)
- Bold/Assertive (Items 12–16)
- Egalitarian (Items 17–22)
- Introvert (Items 23–27)

Scoring is conducted on a five-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 to 5 for each item.

The religiousness variable was assessed using the aforementioned Glock and Stark instrument, excluding the intellectual dimension. The final 26-item version evaluates four dimensions (ideological, emotional, consequential, ritualistic), with all Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 as shown in Table 2, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including frequency, percentage, and charts, utilizing SPSS software. In this approach, the researcher calculates sample statistics and then generalizes these to the population using estimation and hypothesis testing. In general, statistical methods involving inference or generalization are referred to as inferential statistics.

To test the research model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, implemented via Smart PLS software.

Results

In this section, demographic information is first examined and for this purpose, related frequency indices are used. Findings related to the demographic characteristics of the sample group

Table 1. Frequency related to the demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics	Age	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 25 years	21	6.50
	25-35 years	52	16.10
	36-45 years	71	22
	46-55 years	98	30.30
	56-60 years	75	23.20
	61 years and above	6	1.90
Spouse's age	Under 25 years	58	18
	25-35 years	79	23.50
	36-45 years	122	37.80
	46-55 years	58	18
	56-60 years	9	2.80
	61 years and above	0	0
Education	Undergraduate	14	4.30
	Diploma	73	13.30
	Associate degree	88	27.20
	Bachelor's degree	103	31.90
	Master's degree and above	75	32.20
Spouse's education	Undergraduate	28	8.70
	Diploma	95	29.40
	Associate degree	46	14.20
	Bachelor's degree	71	22
	Master's degree and above	83	25.70

Based on the data of the results of Table 1, it has been shown that the age distribution of participants in different age groups is diverse. The largest number of participants are in the age group between 36 and 50 years. These results show that people in this age group make up the largest number of samples. Regarding the age of the participants' spouses, the largest percentage is in the age groups of 25 to 45 years. These results show that the choice of spouses has occurred mostly from the same age periods. Regarding education, the largest percentage of participants had a bachelor's degree. These results show that the largest number of educations was at the bachelor's level among the participants. In terms of occupation, the largest percentage of participants worked in the field of freelance and employee work.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, first, in a preliminary study, each of the questionnaires was administered to 347 samples and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for their questions. In a sample of 347, is the reliability of the questionnaire equal to the table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha values, Communality and Composite reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70	Composite Reliability > 0.70	Communality > 0.50
Faithful	0.922	0.937	0.681
Egalitarian	0.896	0.920	0.658
Courageous	0.919	0.939	0.755
Personality Traits	0.977	0.978	0.624
Introverted	0.890	0.920	0.696
Religious	0.972	0.974	0.588
Emotional	0.915	0.934	0.701
Childbearing	0.986	0.987	0.584
Ritualistic	0.889	0.913	0.602
Fair	0.951	0.958	0.673
Consequence	0.888	0.915	0.643

According to Table 2, since the significance level (sig) for all variables is less than 0.05, the data obtained from the questionnaires are not normal and the research data do not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, structural equation modeling based on partial least squares was used to test the conceptual model and in general to test the research hypotheses, because this method is not sensitive to the distribution of the data.

To calculate the divergent validity in this study, the Fornell and Larker table was used, which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Divergent validity with the Fresnel-Larker method

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Faithful											
2. Egalitarian	0.74	0.81									
3. Courageous	0.73	0.73	0.87								
4. Personality Traits	0.71	0.73	0.74	0.79							
5. Introverted	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.63	0.83						
6. Religious	0.75	0.75	0.65	0.63	0.76	0.77					
7. Emotional	0.79	0.69	0.61	0.67	0.71	0.66	0.84				
8. Childbearing	0.74	0.61	0.61	0.68	0.62	0.68	0.73	0.76			
9. Ritualistic	0.73	0.60	0.69	0.57	0.60	0.63	0.76	0.61	0.77		
10. Fair	0.60	0.67	0.60	0.58	0.68	0.52	0.76	0.67	0.76	0.82	
11. Consequence	0.66	0.70	0.69	0.57	0.51	0.55	0.70	0.62	0.75	0.77	0.70

As shown in Table 3, taken from the Fresnel and Larker method, it is clear that the AVE square root of the latent variables in the present study that are located in the cells in the main diagonal of the matrix is greater than the correlation value between them arranged in the cells below the main diagonal. Therefore, it can be stated that in the present study, the structures (latent variables) in the model interact more with their indicators than other structures. In other words, the divergent validity of the model is at an appropriate level.

Table 4. Statistics related to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Variable	Z value	P	Result
Religious	0.052	0.032	Not normal
Personality Traits	0.068	0.001	Not normal
Childbearing	0.472	0.001	Not normal

According to Table 4, since the significance level (sig) for all variables is less than 0.05, the data obtained from the questionnaires are not normal and the research data do not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, structural equation modeling based on partial least squares was used to test the conceptual model and in general to test the research hypotheses because this method is not sensitive to the data distribution.

The research model is examined in three stages. In the first stage, the external model of the research is examined, in the second stage, the internal model was examined, and the third stage was dedicated to examining the overall research model.

Evaluation of the measurement model (external model)

Results show the values of the path coefficients or beta of the specified relationships of the variables in the research model. The factor loading coefficient is a value between zero and one. If the factor loading is less than 0.4, the relationship is considered weak and is discarded. If the factor loading is greater than 0.4, it is very desirable. Given that the factor loading of all questions is above 0.4, no question is eliminated.

Overall Model Fit

The overall model includes both the measurement and structural model parts, and by confirming its fit, the model fit examination is complete. To examine the model fit, it is sufficient to measure a criterion called GOF. This index is the square of the product of the average values of the communalities and the average coefficients of determination (R^2). Values of 0.36, 0.25, and 0.01 are described as strong, moderate, and weak, respectively.

Table 5. GOF Test

Variable	Communality	R^2
Faithful	0.68	0
Egalitarian	0.66	0
Courageous	0.75	0
Personality Traits	0.62	0.71
Introverted	0.69	0
Religious	0.59	0.96
Emotional	0.70	0
Childbearing	0.58	0
Ritualistic	0.60	0
Fair	0.67	0
Consequence	0.64	0
GOF	R^2	Communality
0.608	0.565	0.655

Given the value obtained for GOF greater than 0.5, a strong fit for the overall model is confirmed. Summary of the results of the research hypotheses are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Summary of the results of the research hypotheses

Path	Path coefficient	P	Result
Childbearing-Religiosity	0.98	54.26	Confirmed
Childbearing-Personality Traits	0.87	47.53	Confirmed
Religiosity-Personality Traits	0.71	20.57	Confirmed
Childbearing-Religiosity-Childbearing	-	5.32	Confirmed
Demographic Characteristics-Childbearing	0.07	0.85	Not confirmed

The results of this study showed that childbearing has a significant effect on religiosity and personality traits, such that the path coefficient between childbearing and religiosity (0.780) and between childbearing and personality traits (0.873) directly indicate a strong relationship between these variables. Also, religiosity has a positive effect on personality traits and, with a path coefficient of 0.608, plays an effective role in strengthening positive personality traits. In addition, religiosity, as a mediating variable, plays a key role in the relationship between childbearing and personality traits, such that the results of the Sobel test (5.32) confirm this mediation. These findings emphasize the importance of the role of family and religious values in the development of personality and beliefs of individuals and can be a basis for cultural and social policies. Since the t-statistic is less than 1.96, the research hypothesis that demographic characteristics have a significant effect on childbearing is rejected. This indicates that there is insufficient evidence in the data under study to confirm the significant effect of demographic characteristics on childbearing.

Discussion

The present study aimed to develop a model of fertility intention based on demographic factors and personality traits, with an emphasis on the mediating role of religiosity among married couples in the city of Khomein. This research examined various factors influencing fertility intention, focusing in particular on how personality traits affect religiosity. The findings revealed that religiosity functions as a significant mediating variable between personality traits and fertility intention. These results not only clarify the relationships among the studied variables but also offer a comprehensive perspective on the role of religious values and personality traits in life decision-making processes.

Initially, the study found that fertility intention has a significant direct impact on religiosity. This suggests that the family unit, especially in societies where religious values are prominent, may serve as a context for reinforcing religious beliefs and values. This finding aligns with prior research by Alijani et al. (2023) and Torabi and sheidani (2019), which confirmed the role of the family in strengthening religiosity and moral values.

Moreover, the analyses indicated that personality traits have both direct and indirect effects on religiosity. Traits such as conscientiousness, honesty, and conservatism were significantly more pronounced among religious individuals. These results are consistent with studies by Amini et al. (2022) and Kaveh Firouz et al. (2021), which identified religiosity as a factor that reinforces positive personality characteristics. Additionally, religiosity was found to exert a direct influence on fertility intention. This relationship may stem from the emphasis many religions place on childbearing as a moral and religious obligation. The current study found that religious individuals are more inclined toward having children, supporting previous research by Amini et al. (2022) and Saei et al. (2017).

The findings also suggested that the experience of childbearing can contribute to the development and transformation of personality traits. Taking on new responsibilities and increased interaction within the family setting may enhance attributes such as discipline, commitment, and social skills. These findings underscore the developmental role of parenting in shaping individual personality traits. Furthermore, the mediating role of religiosity between childbearing and personality traits was highlighted. This suggests that religiosity may act as a bridge between these two variables,

reinforcing their reciprocal effects. The Sobel test further confirmed the significance of this mediation effect.

Interestingly, contrary to initial expectations, demographic characteristics did not have a statistically significant effect on fertility intention. Although the path coefficient ($\beta = 0.660$) indicated a weak positive relationship, the t-value ($t = 0.854$) was below the significance threshold of 1.96, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. This may reflect the complex nature of fertility intention, which is influenced by multiple factors such as economic status, cultural context, and social conditions—factors that demographic characteristics alone cannot adequately capture.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the important roles played by religious values and personality traits in the decision to have children. These insights could inform social and cultural policymaking and be used in the design of programs aimed at promoting fertility and strengthening family structures. Emphasizing the connection between religiosity, personality traits, and fertility intention could support the development of educational initiatives for families and young adults. Such programs may help align religious values with individuals' psychological and personal needs, facilitating more informed fertility-related decisions.

Given these results, the role of cultural and religious institutions in promoting family and religious values becomes especially important. Raising public awareness about the positive influence of religiosity on personality traits and fertility intentions can form a critical part of this effort.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this research. Conducted exclusively in the city of Khomein, the findings may not be generalizable to other societies or cultures due to social and cultural differences. Additionally, the use of self-report measures may introduce response bias. Considering additional demographic variables such as economic status, education level, and cultural diversity in more detail could affect the precision of the results. For instance, the findings indicate that age, as a demographic factor, has a significant impact on fertility intention, potentially due to differences in life experience, accumulated knowledge, and maturity. Older individuals may exert a stronger influence on fertility intention due to their greater experience in specific life domains.

The use of specific statistical tools may also limit the capacity to analyze more complex inter-variable relationships. To overcome these limitations, future research should replicate this study in other cities and communities with varying cultural and social structures to improve the

generalizability of the results. Incorporating qualitative methods alongside quantitative approaches could yield a deeper understanding of the beliefs and motivations underlying religiosity and fertility intention. Furthermore, including variables such as social support and economic status as potential influences could enhance explanations of fertility intention.

Practical recommendations include developing educational programs for married couples to reinforce religious and personality values, and designing cultural and social interventions that emphasize the role of religiosity in shaping family life. Future research might also explore gender differences in the relationship between religiosity, personality traits, and fertility intention, opening new avenues for study. Finally, future studies should consider additional complex social and economic variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of fertility behaviors.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Funding

The authors did (not) receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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