

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING CHILDREN IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY[#]

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This study is based on the data collected from 196 currently married women, aged 18-45 years from Faisalabad, Pakistan in 1992. Using triangulation strategy, this study tried to identify the importance and value of having children in people's life that is an advancement towards understanding the determinants of fertility behaviour. The analysis argued that in this population, there are several values that are conducive to high fertility. In these social milieu children are seen not only as a prime source of prestige and security, and source of income right from their childhood. Moreover, children are also seen as a source of love, affection, satisfaction, and hope for many parents. This lead to the conclusion that as long as children remain the main source of security parents will continue to entertain large family.

Pakistan is a nation with an estimated population (mid-1996) of about 140 million. Fertility rates are among the highest in Asia. Despite increased urbanization, some economic development, the massive government efforts to reduce fertility, fertility rates have not fallen at the expected level. It is thought that one reason for the slower rate of demographic change is the inability of these programmes to understand and change the complex fabric of Pakistani society. To check the population growth rate it is essential to understand the process through which the fertility behaviour is regulated in a given cultural set-up. Because reproductive behaviour, like other human behaviors, is also governed by social and cultural milieu. The present study focuses attention on some of the perceived importance of having children which are directly or indirectly influence the fertility behaviour.

The importance of having children for parents has been viewed within quite different conceptual frameworks. Economic theories of fertility focus on the cost and utility of children (i.e., utility is a measure of importance). The economic approach, using a micro-economic

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framework, views the individual as trying to maximize their own satisfaction, given a particular range of goods, the price of each and their own taste and income. In this context children are considered to be a particular type of goods and the demand and utility of children competes with the demands for and utility of other alternative goods.

Others, who adopt a more social-psychological approach, focus more directly on the value of having children in the context of the individual's overall needs and values. Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) outlined a value scheme consisting of nine basic values derived from psychological and socio-cultural needs. These values are: (i) social identity, (ii) self expansion, (iii) morality, (iv) affiliation, (v) novelty, (vi) power, (vii) creativity, (viii) social comparison, and (ix) economic utility. Children are viewed as instrumental in fulfilling these values or needs, but any particular value can also be met in ways other than by having children. Like economic theories, their framework also includes the cost of children but unlike economic theories this framework gives attention to values and psychological needs, and the societal barriers and facilitators that may intervene between desired family size and actual fertility. The approach does not, however, specify the relationship amongst these factors.

A social-psychological approach has been adopted in a number of empirical studies. A cross national survey-based study known as the Value of Children (VOC) project was conducted in six developing and two developed countries. In this study perceptions of the value of children were treated as intervening variables to explain how and why socioeconomic change effects fertility change. Using an explanatory framework that in fact owed more to demographic transition theory than to an analysis of psychological needs, this study tested propositions about the micro-level impacts of modernization and economic development (Fawcett, 1983).

Aghajanian (1988) in a study of the value of children in Iran, found that they are considered essential for both social and psychological reasons, while childlessness has a high social cost and carries a stigma in the Iranian socio-cultural system. He further argued that there is a decline in the perceived economic utility of children and an increase in the awareness of the cost of educating children, especially among educated, working and urban women, who place a greater value on the quality of children than on their quantity. However, the psychological utility of children is more important among these women than their economic utility. Hence, as parents are different with respect to their

social and economic characteristics, variation exist at individual level for the perceived importance of having children.

Importance of having children in any society and the extent to which having children is important are complex questions, which are not easy to answer. The value and reasons attached to having children by one particular married couple often differ from those of another. The way people assess the importance of having children is likely to affect their ideas about family size.

The main aim of the present study is to explore the social and cultural factors which account for the importance of having children for women in Pakistan. The study is an exploratory examination of the subject using a relatively small sample of respondents. The specific objective of the present study is to explore the social and cultural importance of children for parents and the way they relate to the fertility level of the respondent.

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METHOD

Area of Study

This study was carried out in Faisalabad city during the year 1991. Faisalabad is a very large urban centre in Punjab, and it is the third largest city of Pakistan (according to its population) with a population of over 1104 thousand in 1981. It has both traditional agrarian characteristics as well as exposure to modernization. It is an important city for education, industrial, agricultural, and commercial

activity. Hence it is in many respects a very adequate representation of Pakistan.

Sample

As the study is an exploratory examination of the subject, it was felt that a sample of approximately 200 eligible women, carefully selected, would be enough to obtain a good picture of fertility behaviour in this locality. As the main objective was to explore fertility behaviour, it was decided that women aged 18 to 45 years, with at least one child and living with their husband at the time of interview, would be the population (respondents) of this study. 250 households (Secondary Sampling Units or SSUs) were selected, anticipating that they would yield about 200 women meeting the sample specification. These were enumerated from 25 sample Enumeration Blocks (Primary Sampling Units or PSUs). The decision to select 25 blocks was made with a view to contacting respondents from different areas of the city so that the sample did not reflect unusual ecological patterns.

The sampling frame used was the master sample prepared by the Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics in urban areas. Faisalabad city has been demarcated into 920 Enumeration Blocks, of which 328, 540, and 52 Enumeration Blocks belong to low, middle, and high income groups, respectively. The distribution of sample's households to three strata is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of sample households

Income Group	Total number of Enumeration Blocks in the Frame	Number of Sample Enumeration Blocks (PSUs)	Number of Sample Household (SSUs)
Low	328	8	80
Middle	540	13	130
High	52	4	40
Total	920	25	250

Since a prepared frame of eligible women was not available, a multistage cluster sample was adopted. The number of sample Enumeration Blocks (PSUs) allocated from each stratum was selected with a probability proportional to the number of households by the Karachi statistical division. This sample was considered as the primary sampling units or cluster. It included 25 Enumeration Blocks of Faisalabad. The selection of households within each sample PSU were considered as a second stage or intermediate sampling cluster. 10 households from each PSU were selected systematically with equal probability using a random start and a sampling interval. For every PSU a new random start was taken¹. Due to over-sampling of households, household substitutes in the case of noneligible women were not taken. In cases where more than one eligible women were in the residential unit, the very first one contacted was interviewed.

Instruments

An interview schedule containing 150 main questions was developed as a way of trying to ensure that complete and uniform data were obtained. Most of the questions were open-ended rather than structured but like those which needed the answer of 'yes' or 'no' or 'agree' or 'uncertain' were precoded. The categories presented later are their result of the classification of individual responses.

To assess the effectiveness and consistency of the schedule pre-test was carried out. This test was carried out with six women who were selected by stratified random sampling from each social class. After making minor revisions on the basis of experiences in the pilot, the interview schedule was finalized.

The research in this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methodology to examine the fertility behaviour. Problem of combining both in this study was that the interviews were arguably not as 'indepth' as they could have been with a

¹ The total number of household was divided by 10 and its quotient was used as the sampling interval (SI). By using a random number table, the first random number was selected against the serial number which lie between 1 and the quotient. The serial number equivalent to the first random number selected was the first sample household. By adding the SI to this serial number, the serial number of next sample households were determined.

smaller sample, yet the sample size was not sufficient for any sophisticated statistical analysis.

In Pakistan having children is so culturally normative that it is not easy to find a simple answer as to the extent to which it is important to have them. However, in the present study an attempt was made to identify some of these factors which indicate the reasons why having children is so important in the country. Utilizing data from the survey this paper outlines the views of women on the importance of having children in Pakistan. For the purpose of data analysis, the responses to open ended and structured questions were classified into the following three categories.

- (i) **Social and Cultural Importance:** Factors such as the protection of marriage, prestige, and the importance of a son were included in this group.
- (ii) **Economic Importance:** Child labour and security in old age were ground in this category.
- (iii) **Psychological Importance:** This included all items related to emotional feelings such as love, affection, and excitement, and providing a purpose and responsibility in life.

These categories are not based on any specific theoretical framework; rather they are based on examination of individual responses.

Procedure

Subjects were contacted individually at their residence. They were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured that the responses would be kept confidential. However, some younger women, especially from the lower social class, were not accustomed to making important decisions on their own. To them giving answers to a stranger about their family life was an important decision which they could not make by themselves. In such cases permission were taken from the husband or mother-in-law as well.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Socio-Cultural Importance of Having Children

The perception of the importance of having children is influenced by the social and cultural aspects of the society in which

the individual lives. The psychological importance of having children is also influenced by social/cultural features. Some of the cultural and social needs reported by the respondents of this study and perceived to be performed by the children in Pakistani society are as follows.

Cementing the Marriage

In Pakistan having children is regarded as a way of cementing a marriage and acts as a deterrent against divorce, which is why, after marriage, convention decrees that the first child should be born as soon as possible. If this does not happen the wife lacks any standing and feels her married life is threatened. Indeed, if a wife fails to produce a child, this usually leads either to a husband's taking a second wife in a polygamous relationship² or more commonly to divorce and his second marriage. Overall children help to enhance the status of the wife in many ways. And once they have children, couples believe they should try to continue with their marriage even if they are not happy in other respects.

The belief that children help to cement a marriage is also common in other societies. For example, Busfield and Paddon (1977, p.135), who carried out a study in England, report the view of an interview in response to the question: "What if you'd had no children, what difference do you think that would have made?". Replies of a large number of respondents emphasized the role of the children in holding the family together in times of crisis.

These types of feeling are even stronger in Pakistan, as the whole system of society revolves around the family. No economic support system exists either for childcare or for old age. Parents feel that bringing up the children is their responsibility and in case of divorce, the children will suffer the most. For the sake of the children they try to continue their marriage even in the worst circumstances. When I asked the question "Do you think that children help a marriage to survive?" Women with varied experiences and socioeconomic backgrounds, narrated their stories and their answers in affirmative. Inability to produce a child could result in the second marriage of the husband or a divorce. Threat of these hangs as a sword over the head of the childless married women in our society.

² According to Pakistani law a husband can have four wives at a time with the permission of previous wives.

Table 2

Women's opinions of the importance of having children (N= 196)

Opinions	Percentages			Total
	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
Children are necessary for a successful marriage	95.4	4.6	0	100
Children look after their parents in old age.	87.8	9.2	3.1	100
Children make the parents more responsible.	96.4	2.6	1.0	100
Children add an element of excitement to the home.	99.5	0.5	0	100
Children provide aim to parent's life	95.9	1.5	2.6	100

Table 2 shows that in the present survey 95.4 per cent of the women agreed that children are necessary for a successful marriage and only 4.6 per cent disagreed. It also contains data on a number of other beliefs about having children, the discussion on which follows.

Prestige and Security

Having children in traditional societies is also viewed as a source of respect and prestige. Where this is the case, most people want to have a large number of children. Benedict (1972, p.82) described the situation like this: "In so far as prestige factors are linked with family size, the emphasis in the vast majority of the world's societies is on the maximum production of children".

Lorimer (1958) advanced the hypothesis that corporate kin groups, generate strong motives for high fertility. There is evidence to support this hypothesis. In societies where there is a strong emphasis on the male line of descent, barrenness in women or even the failure to produce a son sometimes leads to the repudiation of a wife. Faour (1989, p.255) puts it like this: "Rich and powerful Arab men boast about the number of sons they have, and some resort to polygynous marriage mainly to attain that goal".

In his study of the Yoruba in Nigeria, Caldwell (1982) found that most respondents placed a high value on building up a large network of relatives by reproduction and marriage, partly because these ties represent a source of security and potential aid during hard times, and partly because they saw their own power and prestige as determined by the number of adult supports. In a recent study of Africa, Caldwell, Orubuloye, and Caldwell (1982) argued that a man's economic, social, and physical safety was determined by the number of his relatives achieved through fatherhood, marriage or the marriages of the children.

Children and large families are also perceived as a source of prestige and respect in Pakistani society. The family is almost the only form of physical security in certain parts of the country, especially in rural areas, where police and other forms of legal organization are just like puppets in the hands of big landlords. In rural areas all conflicts, theoretically, go to the village *Panchayat* (an open court headed by some elderly or influential people of the community), which has power to arbitrate on such matters. These *Panchayats* are, however, at the mercy of big landlords. Though the ordinary or poor people cannot oppose them, they can please them by providing them with free or cheap child labour, which they can only do with a big family. In return they can expect some guarantee of security. Besides this, in such situations ordinary people with large families can handle every day problems of rural life such as guarding their territory against encroachment from neighboring cultivators, getting their share of farm water, and selling their products and such like in a more favourable way because they feel strength in their number³. In urban areas, if people have more children, they can train them in different fields and thus they have access to, and a measure of control in, different government and semi-government organizations. In addition, they can build up a large network of relatives through their children's marriages. The relatively weak system of social justice reinforces relationships such as those of kinship, which provide a system of mutual aid. If people have relatives in different institutes or organizations they can obtain

³ (i) The size of land holding in Pakistan is very small, because of this the possibility always exists is that a farmer, while tending the edge of his plot, may expropriate a tiny piece of neighboring land. (ii) Though Pakistan has one of the best irrigation system in the World even so the supply of irrigation water is not enough. Farmers usually face certain conflicts over the distribution of water.

privileges by influencing the officials, not only in that particular department but also by approaching other departments, and they feel proud to use relatives to cut corners.

In Pakistani society having a big family or a vast network of relatives can also give a feeling of prestige at the time of family ceremonies, especially at the time of the marriage of children and at funeral ceremonies. Because these are two basic events when almost all the relative gather together, if people have big gatherings of relatives in these occasions, it helps to magnify their social importance and hence they feel prestigious and powerful.

Table 3

The advantages of having children (N= 196)

Advantages	Percentage of Women
Source of prestige and power	36.7
Source of network of relatives	10.7
Source of income	31.6
Source of old age security	13.8
No advantage	7.2
Total	100

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents to an open ended question about the perceived advantages of having children. In response to the question concerning the advantages of a large family (at the time of the survey a family of four children was considered ideal, more than that was treated as a large family), nearly 37% of the sample women mentioned that having a large family was a means of achieving a position of strength and power which protected the family during hard times and about 11% said that a large family was a way of generating extra influence through relatives.

The Preference for Sons

The preference for a son and the desire to have a large number of sons, at least two or three, is a dominant factor which motivates people to have more children. The respondents were asked to state

the reasons for their son-preference. Most of them cited the same old instrumental and personal consideration for their son-preference; old age security, financial help, and family lineage. The large number of respondents, 36.2% cited old age security as the reason for having sons (Table 4). In our society where there are no organized social security programmes and women are not economically independent, care of the aged is assigned to the family, especially son's family. The scatter of reasons has a wide range and they could add up to build a cumulative effect.

Table 4

The reasons for having sons (N= 196)

Reasons	Percentage of Women
Source of family income	29.1
Inheritance/Lineage	10.2
Old age security	36.2
Daughter's protection	3.6
Satisfaction/Happiness	11.2
Social status/Power	9.7
Total	100

The Economic Importance of Having Children

Due to their economic utility in the developing countries, and particularly in areas where a rural economy predominates, the importance of having children is well documented (e.g., Cain, 1977; Caldwell, 1976; Mamdani, 1972; Poffenberger & Poffenberger, 1973). Children can contribute to the family income by performing a variety of jobs. Girls do household chores, help on the farm, and provide child care for younger siblings; while boys are engaged in farming, looking after the family business and various forms of unskilled labour. The economic importance of having children is now considered under three main headings: Child labour, and Security in old age.

Child Labour

In preindustrial societies children are junior workers from an early age. They perform the less preferred chores which their elders

cannot or will not do. Chores such as carrying messages, fetching water or fuel, sweeping out and caring for farm animals, and looking after younger siblings. While such tasks may not directly produce income or food, they are necessary for household maintenance. The performance of these jobs by children relates older family members for more directly productive work and hence are of indirect economic value (Caldwell, 1976, p. 344).

Children have been useful economically; they have often started contributing to the household economy from the age of 3 or 4 years. In the poorest sectors of modern society- and especially in Third World countries - a child's contribution to the household can still be crucial". Writes Gittins (1985, p.93).

However, some writers have been more critical of claims as to the value of the contribution of a child's labour. Cain (1982, p.164). For example, states that:

The slowly accumulating evidence on child labour suggests that at least as long as children are under the direct control of their parents (the period during which they are actually members of their parents' household), the product of their labour does not compensate for the cost of their cumulative consumption.

The suggestion of Cain is quite right, even when applied to Pakistani society, but only under ideal circumstances when both parents have a chance to bring up their children. However, in certain situations when there is a family emergency, very young children have to work to earn money. In these cases although their income is not enough, they are often the main bread earner in the family and not only do they have to earn for themselves but also for the whole family. In the present survey we have the example of Kalsum, who has five children. In the present survey 2.9% of children, who were under ten years of age, were working for employers to earn cash for their families. In these circumstances Cain's evidence about the product of child labour and the cost of their cumulative consumption is not supported.

Normally children also provide a lot of help in general household tasks. But because nobody pays them for the help it is not considered to be economic help by either the parents or society and is taken for granted. In Pakistani society girls usually start helping with the housework when they are very young, especially when they

are not going to school; and their labour benefits parents in different ways. In the past they only helped with sweeping, washing, or looking after young siblings, but now with the improvement of cottage industries, they are also participating in cash earning activities. Boys meanwhile usually help with outdoor activities such as helping their fathers in their business.

In Pakistan schooling is not compulsory and there are no strict rules governing child labour. Most working class people cannot afford to send their children to school. Hence, to protect them from bad company or crime parents send them to learn some labour skills, particularly in urban areas where their labour is not needed in the household. In the beginning they work just as a helpers, but within two or three years they start getting paid.

Table 5

Work status of children by their age

Age group (in years)	Work for employer		Work for family		Do not work		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
5-10	6	2.9	0	0	201	97.1	207	100
11-15	10	5.8	6	3.5	155	90.6	171	100
16-20	12	12.9	10	10.7	71	76.3	93	100
20 & Over	11	30.5	8	22.2	17	47.2	36	100
Total	39		24		444		507	

As the present study is based on urban area, a question was asked about the paid work of each child. Though most of the children were in school, there were some who were working for cash, either for a family business or for an employer, as full time workers. Table 5 shows the work status of children by age. It shows that some children started work when they were younger than ten years, though this percentage is very low and more than 50% of them engaged in paid work after the age of twenty years. Girls were also engaged in earning money for their families.

Table 6

Distribution of working children according to their sex

Work Status	Name		Female		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Work for employer	25	64.1	14	35.9	39	100
Work for family	12	50.0	12	50.0	24	100
Total	37		26		63	

Table 6 shows the distribution of working children according to their sex. It shows that girls were also working both for family businesses and for employers. In the family business, girls usually engaged in sewing clothes and preparing food which their fathers sold in their shops, while boys worked in the family shops.

Security in Old Age

There is no doubt that many parents in developing countries have real fears about old age. Savings, pensions, and social security income help support many aging parents in developed countries, but are usually unavailable in traditional societies. Parents in these societies must, therefore, rely on their children for care and economic support in old age (Bongaarts & Menken, 1983). Goody (1976, p.87) attempts to see the developed of domestic institution in relation to changes in the mode of productive activity and states:

There is the security in old age, which is a prime consideration when there are no alternative means of saving up for the period, when an individual can no longer support himself directly out of his productive activities; in these situations an important part of one's savings, one's capital, consists of one's kin.

In a study of the direct economic cost and benefits of children, Caldwell (1983) states that children represent an investment for the future. There is often no satisfactory form of investment for protection and support in old age, except surviving children, especially in third world rural areas and even for many in urban areas.

Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni (1989) compared the motive for having children among wives and husbands in India and found that although women rely more on children for old age security than do their husbands, the overwhelming majority of both men and women rely on children for support in old age.

The whole system of Pakistani society is based on the family. It is the responsibility of parents to look after their children and to provide for all their basic needs, including medical care, education, dowry, and marriage expenses. This involves a lot of money and if people have children they can hardly save any money for themselves. This might be expected to lead towards reduction of family size but it does not because there is no financial or physical support for old age provided either by the government or by private charitable institutions even in hardship cases. The only help which needy people can get from the government or other wealthy person is '*zakat*' (*zakat* is one of the fundamental duties of Islam and every Muslim has to pay *zakat* at the rate of 2.5 per cent per annum on the total of their savings. The amount of *zakat* thus collected is spent on giving assistance to the poor, the orphans, and the indigent). But if they are not really very poor, people feel stigmatized when receiving this help because they think it is the right of those people who can not earn or do not have any other means of support. It should be noted that a pension is only granted to retirees from state employment. Insurance is not common even among the educated and wealthy and the government is still financially unable to take care of the life and well being of old people. Therefore, it is not surprising that parents think of bearing children for support in their old age. To this end parents usually undergo considerable hardship in the early years of parenthood in order to obtain support in old age. People who wish to lead a secure life in their old age are often inclined to have more children so that the burden of support can be shared among more children. This outlook motivates them to have a large family.

Poffenberger and Poffenberger (1973, p.143) in their study of an Indian village, state the view of one of their respondent's as: "when there are five or six children, parents can have a peaceful life in old age". Dharmalingam (1994), in a study of old age support in a South Indian village, also found that those women and men who had more surviving children were better-off in their old age when compared to those who had fewer surviving children.

In urban areas of Pakistan, it is especially difficult for women to get a job if they are not educated or have no skills. Only domestic labour, such as cleaning and washing is available and only those women who belong to the lower class or those who do not have anyone to support them do these types of work. For middle-class, unskilled women finding a paid job is even more difficult as they can not do these types of jobs. This is due to family pressure because it brings a bad name to their families. Thus, they are totally dependent on their children and husband. On the other hand, men who have government jobs retire at the age of 60 years and get a pension and those who are self employed work for as long as they are physically capable. But in case of any problems they also depend on their children.

Children are not wanted for economic help only. When parents have enough money to fulfill their economic needs and in their old age they do not seek economic support from their children, they still want physical and emotional support. For example, they want nursing care in times of sickness and want someone's company in their old age, especially if one parent dies. Busfield and Paddon (1977) found the same sort of feeling about emotional support in England.

In a historical study of the family, Gittins (1985) reviewed the reason for having children in modern industrial society, where state takes the responsibility of sustenance in old age. In her opinion, children especially daughters are still looked up as a better alternative to institutionalization. Children are a source of love and emotional support and as a bastion against loneliness.

In the past, in Pakistan unlike in Western society, parents used to rely on the support of their sons for support in their old age, even though according to Islam it is the duty of all children to look after their aged parents regardless of whether the child is a daughter or a son. This is because Pakistani society, which was part of India for centuries, has been influenced by Indian customs and the expectation of society is that aged parents should be fed, clothed, sheltered, and looked after by their sons (Dharmalingam, 1994). But now changes in behaviour can be observed, as daughters are also becoming important for support in old age. In her study about India, Vlassoff (1990) pointed out that those widows who lived with married daughters were economically better off than those who lived with sons. Dharmalingam (1994) also found that having many daughters was also important in order to obtain reasonable support in old age.

He states that most elderly men depend on their son and spouses, whereas women depend either on themselves or on their daughters.

In the present study, though all the respondents were of a relatively young age i.e., aged between 20-45 years and were not in a situation where they needed this type of support, they even then expected that they would need support in the future. When the researcher asked, 'Do you think children are necessary for old security', 87.8% of the women agreed, while only 9.2% disagreed, and 3.1% were uncertain (Table 7).

Table 7

Women's opinions on the importance of children for old age security

Opinions	Percentages			Total
	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
Children are necessary for old age security.	87.8	9.2	3.1	100
Sons are necessary for old age security.	87.2	8.2	4.6	100
Daughters are necessary for old age security.	64.8	12.8	22.4	100

When the researcher split this question into two parts and asked their opinion about the importance of having sons and daughters for security and support in old age. 87.2 per cent of the women agreed that a son is necessary for old age. Only 8.2 per cent disagreed and 4.6 per cent were uncertain (Table 7). Regarding the importance of daughters, 64.8 per cent agreed that daughters were also necessary for old age security, 12.8 per cent disagreed, while 22.4 per cent were uncertain. Though all the women agreed that daughters are more caring and helpful, most of them did not expect that their daughters would help them in their old age, as they themselves would be dependent on their husbands. These types of feeling enhance the preference for sons as well as indicating the economic dependency of women. If women are economically independent they can help their parents in the same way as sons, or at least parents can expect the same role from them as they expect from their sons.

On the whole women mostly expected their sons to support them when they become older, as is customary in Pakistani society.

But they also voiced fears and uncertainty about their situation and some of the respondents expressed their views in ways which indicated negative feeling concerning dependency on children, particularly in the case of daughters. This seems to be the result of the economic pressures and trends towards nuclear families.

The Psychological Importance of Having Children

Children can also be a source of love, affection, satisfaction, and hope for many parents for whom the presence of a child is an important aspect of family life. In this case the importance of having children can also bear on the total fertility of a woman.

Purpose in Life, Love, and Affection

There is a general feeling in Pakistani society that it is not only a woman's instinct to produce and rear children but motherhood is also a woman's destiny and that it makes her life complete. This is something which is learnt from childhood, that the women should want and have children. In Pakistani society motherhood seems to be a very noble role and it is thought that children provide a purpose in life.

Some women simply enjoy the different stages of child-bearing and rearing. One of the respondents who had ten children, of which eight were alive at the time of the interview, expressed her views as:

"I really enjoy my pregnancy. You can feel how a small thing grows and gets larger. When a baby is born you can see it, it is full of life" (Res. No. 36).

Such feelings are replicated by many mothers in Pakistan. 96.4 per cent of the women in the sample agreed that having children were important in making parents more responsible, 99 per cent agreed that children brought an element of excitement, 99.5 per cent agreed that they were a source of love, and 95.9 per cent agreed that they provide a purpose in the parents' life.

The above discussion indicates that in the Pakistani society the reason for having children are so many that it was difficult to locate any specific ones as being of greater importance. Not only women but men too depend on children for a variety of social and economic reasons such as those related to status, prestige, and security. In most of the families interviewed, it was not easy for them to support a large number of children but they struggled and hoped that one or two of their children would be good enough to look after them in their old age or

when they needed help. In a country where people depend on children in so many ways, and especially on sons, a simple reliance on a programme which is based on contraception to reduce the birth rate is not enough. In order to achieve any degree of success in reducing the birth rate, it is crucial to adopt measures to raise the economic and legal status of women in Pakistan. This can be achieved by giving more education to women and men before marriage or by giving certain direct incentives to reduce the birth rate.

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