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MARRIED MEN'S PERSPECTIVES AND REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS ON FERTILITY IN THE PROVINCE WITH THE HIGHEST FERTILITY RATE IN TURKEY: A MIX METHOD STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *Fertility is directly related to the socio-economic, political, and cultural structure of societies. Şanlıurfa is the Province with the highest fertility rate in Turkey. In Şanlıurfa, men play a decisive role regarding fertility-related issues. Therefore, this study is conducted to determine married men's perspectives and reproductive behaviors on fertility in Şanlıurfa.*

Material and Method: *The quantitative dimension of the study was carried out using a mixed methods approach in which 210 men were interviewed and a questionnaire was completed; the qualitative dimension was carried out through in-depth individual interviews with 8 men, using a semi-structured interview form. Analysis of the qualitative data was done using a content analysis technique.*

Results: *In the quantitative dimension of this study, it was found that the mean number of children (3.2±2.0) in the families was high, and the most critical factor that increases the number of children was low education level (odds ratio [OR] 5.2, 95% CI: 1.9-14.3) in men. In the qualitative dimension of this study, it was found that the most common factors increasing the number of children were "preference for male children, not knowing enough about contraceptive methods, using child labor force in agriculture, childcare being easier in an extended family." Besides, it was found that men perceive induced abortion as a sin, the crowded family as powerful, and their sons as insurance in old age.*

Conclusion: *This study has shown that education, cultural norms, and values are instrumental in the fertility rate.*

Keywords: *Men, child, fertility, reproductive behavior.*

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TÜRKİYE'DE DOĞURGANLIĞIN EN YÜKSEK OLDUĞU İLDE EVLİ ERKEKLERİN ÜREME DAVRANIŞLARI VE DOĞURGANLIĞA BAKIŞ AÇILARI: KARMA YÖNTEM ARAŞTIRMASI

ÖZET

Amaç: Doğurganlık, toplumların sosyo-ekonomik, politik ve kültürel yapısıyla doğrudan ilgilidir. Şanlıurfa, Türkiye'de doğurganlık hızının en yüksek olduğu ildir ve erkekler doğurganlıkla ilgili konularda belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle, çalışma Şanlıurfa'da evli erkeklerin üreme davranışlarını ve doğurganlığa bakış açılarını belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır.

Materyal ve Metot: Karma yöntemle yapılan araştırmanın nicel boyutu, 210 erkeğe bir anket formu kullanılarak; nitel boyut ise 8 erkeğe yarı yapılandırılmış bir görüşme formu kullanılarak, derinlemesine bireysel görüşmeler yoluyla yapılmıştır. Nitel verilerin analizinde, içerik analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Bu araştırmanın nicel boyutunda, ailelerde ortalama çocuk sayısının (3,2±2,0) yüksek olduğu ve erkeklerde çocuk sayısını artıran en kritik faktörün düşük eğitim düzeyi (olasılık oranı [OR] 5,2, %95 GA: 1,9-14,3) olduğu saptandı. Bu araştırmanın nitel boyutunda ise, çocuk sayısını artıran en yaygın faktörlerin "erkek çocuk tercihi, gebeliği önleyici yöntemleri yeterince bilmeme, tarımda çocuk işgücünü kullanma, geniş ailede çocuk bakımının daha kolay olması" olduğu saptandı. Ayrıca, erkeklerin küretajı günah, kalabalık aileyi güçlü ve erkek çocukları yaşlılıkta güvence olarak algıladıkları da saptandı.

Sonuç: Bu çalışma, eğitim, kültürel normlar ve değerlerin doğurganlık hızında etkili olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Erkek, çocuk, doğurganlık, üreme davranışı.

INTRODUCTION

Although the fertility rate has generally reached low levels worldwide, there are still significant differences between countries and regions. In underdeveloped and developing countries, maternal and infant mortality rates are still high due to high fertility, risky pregnancies, and complicated births.

Socio-economic development levels, cultural structure, and norms of societies may contain factors that increase fertility rates. Biological factors typically lead to similar outcomes for everyone. However, both socio-cultural and economic factors vary by society and cause various outcomes.[1] The socio-economic development level, cultural structure, and norms of the society contain factors increasing fertility.

One of the most significant reasons having a large number of children in developing countries has been reported to be social insecurity, which is followed by families' desire of being economically active and being taken care of when they get old.[2-5] Otherwise, it is stated that the perceived necessity of having a son in the family, as well as negative thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors related to family planning (FP) methods, are also useful in increasing the number of children.[6,7] It is emphasized that there is a relationship between the social status of women and the number of children in some societies and that the number of children increases as the social status of the women gets lower.[8]

In Turkey, there are significant differences between regions in terms of social and economic development. In the Eastern and South-eastern Regions, where diverse ethnocultural populations (Arabic, Kurdish, etc.) are concentrated, the widespread use of the local native language and the dominance of traditional-cultural norms are remarkable.[9] This traditional structure delays adaptation to modern reproductive behaviors.

Şanlıurfa remains a province with the highest fertility rate and high mother-infant mortality rates, located in the South-eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey.[10] Low education levels and low workforce participation rates among women indicate that, as with many other issues, men are in the decision-making position infertility-related issues.[11] For this reason, it is critical to determine if men's fertility-related behavior and views. It is also necessary to reveal the underlying causes and contradictions of reproduction and birth behaviors, associate them with diverse social structures, and make sense at the 'local' - 'global' level.

This study is conducted to determine married men's perspectives and reproductive behaviors on fertility in Şanlıurfa.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Design and Sample

This study was carried out between 1 August and 31 September 2016 in Şanlıurfa, a province located

in the South-eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. In a study conducted by the State Planning Organization, Şanlıurfa is ranked 73rd out of 81 cities regarding its socio-economic development.[12] The total fertility rate is 1.99 in Turkey, whereas it is 4.1 in Şanlıurfa.[10]

The study was carried using the mixed method. The first part of the research consists of the quantitative phase. In this phase, the study population consisted of 246,653 men living in Şanlıurfa city center who were of reproductive age.[13]

For the sample selection, 30 cluster sampling technique was used, and the number of clusters was determined in proportion to the population of the central districts.[14] A total of 210 people, seven in each cluster, were reached. With the simple random sampling method, 30 streets were identified from the street list of the Province. In every street, the third house from the beginning of the street was designated as the starting point, and visits to the houses on the street's right side continued until seven people from each street were visited. The interview was only done with one married man in each household. If more than one married man in a household could answer the questions, only one married man was interviewed using the people Kish method selection table.[15]

The sample of the qualitative phase of the research was chosen married eight volunteering by the purposive sampling method from among the quantitative phase participants. For the men with different socio-economic levels, a second interview was held in theirs home. Accepting/recruiting participants into the sample was, as stated in the literature, abandoned at the stage where the new data did not bring additional perspectives to the research question.[16] The men interviewed were required to have the following two essential characteristics:

1.Group: Married men having four or more children

2.Group: Married men having less than four children

The Ethical Dimension of The Research

Before starting the study, written permission (dated 27.07.2016 and numbered 2016.157.IRB3.088) was obtained from Koç University Ethics Committee and informed verbal consent were obtained from men who agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Quantitative data were collected via face-to-face interviews using the Data Collection Form.

The Form consisted of 57 questions: 20 questions about socio-demographic characteristics of participants, 31 questions about the fertility characteristics of his wife and the FP methods used, and seven questions about their thoughts on fertility.

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with a semi-structured interview form. It aimed to reveal men's perspective about fertility and the child's value in a family, and why they want to have many children in these in-depth interviews. A flexible interview form was developed to follow a similar flow during the interviews. Informed consent forms were obtained from the participants to record the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the homes of men. by an experienced sociologist involved in the research. Each interview took a mean of 30-35 minutes.

Data Analysis and Variables

Quantitative data obtained from the research were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows 20.0 software. Descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney-U test, intra-group correlation analysis, and logistic regression analysis were used to evaluate the data.

The dependent variable of the study was the number of living children. A logistic regression model was established using variables that were significant in the univariate analyses. Since the median number of children was three, it was chosen as the analyses' cut-off point. The number of living children was categorized as three and below/four and above in logistic regression analysis.

For logistic regression analysis, educational background (lower or higher than the primary education), employment status (employed or unemployed), spouse's educational background (lower or higher than the primary education), spouse's employment status (housewife/employed), family type (nuclear/extended) and gender preference (yes/no) from the independent variables were included in the model. The backward stepwise conditional method was used in the logistic regression analysis. The results were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval.

In the qualitative data analysis, content analysis technique was used.[17,18] The evaluation was made by considering the themes indicated by the codes. While doing the intensive reading, participants' aspects regarding the same coded issues were taken into account. The similarities and differences were

Table 1. Qualitative data themes and codes.

Main Themes	Codes
Desire to have many children	The social, psychological the value of the child Preference for male children Poor or lack of information on contraceptive methods Induced abortion being accepted as "sin". Social pressure and traditions
Benefits of having many children	Being crowded and powerful family Considering children as an 'insurance' at old ages
The challenges of having many children	The necessity of starting to work at an early age The inability to benefit from educational opportunities came to the fore The challenges of living in city

Table 2. Fertility-related characteristics of spouses and level of consistency in men's perspectives regarding these characteristics

Characteristics	Mean±Standard Deviation	Intra-Group Correlation Coefficient	*p*
Spouse's first marriage age	21.0±3.4	0.51	<0.001
The ideal age for first marriage for women	22.2±3.1		
Men's first marriage age	26.0±6.2	0.39	<0.001
The ideal age for first marriage for men	26.2±4.2		
Spouse's first pregnancy age	26.0±4.5	0.51	<0.001
The ideal first pregnancy age	23.5±3.2		
Spouse's last pregnancy age	27.9±5.5	0.51	<0.001
The ideal last pregnancy age	36.3±5.1		
	Median (Min-Max)		
Number of female children	1 (0-5)	0.18	0.08
The ideal number of female children	2 (0-10)		
Number of male children	1 (0-9)	0.41	<0.001
The ideal number of male children	2 (0-10)		

noted to clarify the analysis's next steps, which is also necessary for discovering themes in the interviews.[19] This process improves coding, i.e., 'relating particular passages in the text of an interview to one category, in the version that best fits these textual passages'.[20] The themes and codes are presented in Table 1.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

The participating men's mean age was 40.50±12.0, 30.0% of them had had no formal education. Of the participants, 52.4% were born, and 80.0% lived in the city center, mostly in the city center. Similarly, 89.0% of men were employed, and most of them (51.4%) were employed as workers. Moreover, 39.0% spoke a language other than Turkish at home. Of the participants, 19.0% did not have social security, and 52.9% perceive their economic situation as a medium. The mean duration of marriage was 15.8±12.4. The mean age of first marriage of men was 26.0±6.2, and the mean age of first marriage of their spouses was 21.0±3.4. Of the spouses, 11.0% had their first marriage under the age of 18. The spouses' mean age was 34.5±10.2, and 51.0% had had no formal education. Only 5.2% of the spouses were working in a job that generated income. Of the men, 68.6% stated that they had arranged marriage, and 5.2% stated that they did not have a civil marriage ceremony but had a religious marriage ceremony. It was the first marriage of 97.1% of men, and 43.3% were related to their spouses. The family type was extended in 29.0% of couples.

Of the spouses, 22.9% had a miscarriage, 4.3% had a stillbirth, 3.3% had an unplanned pregnancy, 17.6% had births spaced less than two years apart, and 2.4% had a history of giving birth to a disabled child. Of the men, 14.8% stated that they had children because of sexual preference. The mean age of the spouses' first pregnancy was 26.0±4.5 and the mean age of the last pregnancy was 27.9±5.5. The mean number of pregnancies was 3.7±2.4, the median number of living children was 3 (0-12), the median number of abortions was 1 (1-5), the median number of stillbirths was 1 (1-3), the median number of unplanned pregnancies was 1 (1-4) the median number of male children was 1 (0-9), and the median number of female children was 1 (0-5).

Only 10.5% of the spouses used an FP method. Of the men who did not use any FP method, 44.9% stated that they did not use any method because both their wives and themselves did not want to use any method, whereas 22.5% stated that they did not use any method because they wanted a child, 11.2% stated that their spouse was pregnant and 9.6% stated that their wives were in the menopausal period. Of the men, 85.2% stated that they decided to have children together with their spouses. Also, 86.7% stated that they decided the number of children together with their spouse.

In men's opinion, the mean ideal age for first marriage for women was 21.9±2.9. There was "good" consistency between the first marriage age of their spouses and the ideal age for marriage for women reported by the men and this consistency (p<0.001).

The mean ideal age for first marriage for men was 26.0±4.5. There was a "moderate" consistency between the first marriage age of their spouses and the ideal age for marriage for men reported by the men and this consistency (p<0.001). The median

ideal number of female children was 2 (0-10). There was no consistency between the number of female children and the ideal number of female children reported by men (p> 0.05). Men had a fewer number of female children than they reported. The median ideal number of male children was 2 (0-10). There was a "moderate" consistency between the number of male children and the ideal number of male children reported by men and this consistency (p<0.001). The mean ideal age for the first pregnancy was 23.5±3.2. There was a "moderate" consistency between the age of their spouses at the first pregnancy. The ideal age for the first pregnancy was reported by the men, and this consistency (p<0.001). The mean ideal age for the last pregnancy was 36.3±5.1. There was a "moderate" consistency between the age of their spouses at the last pregnancy and the ideal age for the last pregnancy reported by the men and this consistency (p<0.001) (Table 2).

Many factors that were thought to affect the number of living children were analyzed by univariate analysis. Men who were primary school graduates (51.2%), men whose wives did not receive any formal education (50.0%), those who were living in an extended family (51.7%), and those who had children because of gender preference (80.6%) were found to have four or more children (p<0.05) (Table 3). In men, employment status, health insurance, perceived income level, spouse's employment status, type of marriage, kinship with the spouse, and use of any FP method were found not to affect the number of living children (p>0.05).

Logistic regression analysis was used to evaluate the effect of independent variables on the number of living children. The logistic regression model was created with variables causing a statistically significant difference in univariate analyses. According to the logistic regression model, having four or more children was 5.2 times higher in men with primary and lower education levels (Table 4).

Qualitative Findings

The interviewed men were within the age range of 29-69. Five were primary education graduates, two were secondary education graduates, and one was a university graduate. Five men were artisans, two workers, and one retired. Four men had fewer than four children, and four men had four or more children. During the interviews, socio-cultural factors affecting fertility were revealed through questions aimed at exploring why the participants wanted to have many children and the benefits and challenges of having many children.

Table 3. Distribution of some characteristics of men according to the number of living children

	Number of Living Children					
	3 and Below		4 and Above			
Characteristics	**Number**	**%***	**Number**	**%***	**X^2**	***p***
Educational Background						
Uneducated	31	49.2	32	50.8	28.9	<0.001
Primary education	34	47.9	37	52.1		
Secondary education and above**	58	87.9	8	12.1		
Spouse's Educational Background						
Uneducated	52	50.0	52	50.0	19.5	<0.001
Primary education	42	64.6	23	35.4		
Secondary education and above**	29	93.5	2	6.5		
Family Type						
Nuclear family	95	66.9	47	33.1	6.03	0.014
Extended family	28	48.3	30	51.7		
Having Child Due to Sex Preference						
Yes	6	19.4	25	80.6	27.5	<0.001
No	117	69.2	52	30.8		

*: Column percentage, **: the group that creates the difference

1) The Reasons for The Desire to Have Many Children

The child's social, psychological, and economic value, the preference for male children, poor or lack of information on contraceptive methods, and induced abortion being accepted as "sin" were the most frequently stated reasons under this theme.

The Economic Value of The Child

One of the reasons for having a high number of children is explained to be related to seasonal farm work. Şanlıurfa is the Province where the pool of seasonal migrant agricultural workers is the largest. According to the participants' responses, causes such as urban unemployment, poverty, not having a profession, or not receiving any education come together and make seasonal migrant agricultural work the only option available for low-income families. Also, seasonal agricultural work requires the use of the labor of all members of the family.

Other statements regarding the economic value related to the strength of the large families, the

Table 4. Logistic regression model of the variables influencing the number of living children

Affecting Factors	**B**	***p***	**OR**	**95% CI**
Educational background (secondary and ↑)			1	
Educational background (primary and ↓)	1.6	0.001	5.2	1.9-14.3
Constant	-3.9	<0.001		

possibility to become a big tribe, and provision of domestic solidarity and the perception of sons as the "second/potential father" of the family.

“When you have a son, his waist is strong, and his back is strong, he has his relatives supporting him, he stands by his father. (But) when you have a daughter, and she is 20 years old, she marries and leaves the house. Whatever god wills are good, I mean. It can be a daughter or a son, but I want a son" (35 years old, high school graduate, has two children).

“It is a bit difficult to grow up in a large family. But our income was good, and you can make good money when you go to a field with all that crowd. When there are many workers in your family, your daily wage becomes good, that is why. If they do provide benefits, that is it. There is no other reason."(44 years old, secondary school dropout, has four children).

The Social, Psychological Value of The Child

According to the statements of the participants, it is also thought that children "hold together a household," protect marriages, and enable women and men to take responsibility by transforming them into parents. The child is seen as a god's gift, a source of happiness and joy for the family, and a life goal.

“It is difficult without any children. The child is like a fruit tree. You plant, take care of, and grow it. To be beneficial to society. I see the child that way" (69 years, primary school graduate, retired, has six children).

“A child is a beautiful thing. For example, when you work outside, you are at work and stressed. ..... When you return home to your family, you get rid of all the stress. …. You have a home; you have a path. It cuts you off from the dirty things outside. You say, ‘I have a home, I have a child, I’ll go to them’" (44 years old, secondary school dropout, has four children).

According to the participants' statements, it is not possible to consider a married couple without children as a family. They think that a child is an essential factor that turns a couple into a family and prevents second marriages.

“The child is the color of the home. Two people cannot sit alone at a table. Moreover, maybe it is not the West's case, but in the east, when you have no children... People even think of a second marriage to have a child. To have their lineage continue.” (49 years old, primary school graduate has six children).

Preference for Male Children

It is thought that the more the number of male children, the better. Apart from the economic value of the child, the reasons most expressed by the participants for the preference of male children include; the desire to continue the lineage by having sons, seeing male children as the indicator of healthy households, and as an 'insurance' at old ages, social pressure, and challenges arising from raising daughters.

According to the men's statements, it is not easy to raise girls in crowded areas with intensive face-to-face relationships with relatives or other people. This difficulty is associated with the protection of girls' "honor." It is thought that if there is the slightest question regarding the honor of a girl, this should be punished by the family’s men, leading to the killing of the girl.

“…. In the east, in this region where we live, there are tribes. Ninety percent (of the tribes) do not want girls. It is a little difficult (to raise girls). When you raise a girl, when problems arise, she runs away. (Running away) costs her life. Let us say the girl loves a boy. When she runs away (to that boy), in tribal life, you have a social circle, so you have to kill her. Problems arise" (69 years old, primary school graduate, retired, has six children).

Poor or Lack of Information on Contraceptive Methods

Not knowing anything about safe contraception methods is not a problem expressed much by men under 30. However, men over 40 stated the lack of knowledge about safe contraception methods as one reason for the high number of children.

"To be truthful, we did not have full knowledge about it at that time. We were unaware of contraceptives like pills or contraception methods. We have midwives here, and they have begun to give information to children, after having five-six children" (49 years old, primary school graduate, has six children).

Induced Abortion Being Accepted as "Sin"

According to the participants’ statements, abortion is a sin and is unacceptable. Elective abortion has been legal in Turkey since 1983. Pregnancy before the 10th week of gestation can be terminated in health institutions at the request of spouses. Abortion may be recognized as a legal right; however, in cases where it is seen as a religious sin, it is not seen as a "right" and becomes a complicated issue to resolve.

"My own opinion is that it is a sin. Since Allah gave that child, he/she also has a destiny" (44 years old, secondary school dropout, has four children).

Social Pressure and Traditions

In general, the number of children considered ideal by men, regardless of age and education level, is 4. They cannot explain why this number is 4, but they cannot continue the struggle for life when they have fewer children.

"People of the past, our fathers and uncles, did not have big problems when raising children. For example, now, because it is a bit difficult to earn a livelihood, it is difficult to care for children. Who does not want a good life for his family, for his children? We surely do. We say that (there should be) three, four. (children in a family) (49 years old, primary school graduate, has six children).

2) Benefits of Having Many Children

This theme includes statements related to the desire to have a being crowded and powerful family, large families making childcare easier, and considering children as an 'insurance' at old ages.

Being Crowded and Powerful Family

Families believe that being crowded makes the family look powerful and will prevent possible threats from outside.

"If the number of children is high, we can be powerful in any meeting or fight. We can be strong. That is the reason." (39 years, primary school graduate, has three children).

Considering Children as an 'Insurance' at Old Age

At old ages, parents can transfer the responsibility for earning a livelihood, which is initially shared when the children are at a younger age; therefore, they consider their children as an 'insurance' at old ages.

"My father has four sons. My father is now 43-44 years old, sitting at home (retired), his sons are doing the business. Isn't it a nice thing to have three-four children?" (29 years old, high school graduate has three children).

3) The Challenges of Having Many Children

Under this theme, poverty, the necessity of starting to work at an early age, and the inability to benefit from educational opportunities came to the fore. According to the participants' statements, the most challenging part of growing up in a family with many children is part of the family's poverty at an early age. Especially boys start to provide for the family at an early age, which reduces the duration of education they receive

"The challenge is to give you the simplest example, related to education. Maybe it would have been different if we were three siblings. (But) since we were eight siblings, we had to work to provide for our family." (39 years old, primary school graduate has three children).

Men think that families will decrease the number of children due to the economic difficulties that urban life brings.

"Because in places like villages, there is not much electricity and water costs. There is no problem with eating or drinking. They harvest and then eat and drink them. However, in the city, the step you take costs money. If you do not work in the city, you go hungry. So, what you do; you take measures accordingly." (44 years old, secondary school dropout has four children).

DISCUSSION

In Turkey, marriage is an essential factor in the onset of fertility. In this research, the mean first marriage ages and first childbearing ages of the wives of participating men were lower than the mean in Turkey, which indicates that fertility starts at an early age in this Province.[11] In traditional societies, girls who cannot continue their education due to customs, traditions are married early and give birth at a young age.[21,22] Social norms related to fertility and reproduction also support women's desire to get pregnant immediately after marriage.[23] In this study, too, men got married to younger women. A significant number of these women were under the age of 18. Men see this situation positively.

The study results showed that the education level of men is an essential factor in the fertility rate. Men with a low level of education want to have more children. The studies have reported that in societies with low educational levels, the marriage age decreases, contraception methods are less used, and the number of births increases.[24-26] As a matter of fact, in this study, the rate of having four or more children was found to be 5.2 times higher among men with primary and lower educational levels.

In the study, the rate of using any FP method was found to be 10.6%. When about 10% of the men,

who do not need FP, whose wife is in the menopausal period, and whose wife died, are excluded, it can be said that about 80% of this society wants children and is open to giving birth to a child. The rate of using FP in Şanlıurfa is significantly lower than the overall results for Turkey[11] and the results of other studies carried out in Şanlıurfa.[27] Of the men, 55.9% stated that both their wives and they did not want to use contraception. The fact that having several children is socially accepted and that terminating pregnancy is forbidden by religion could be why they do not want to use contraception methods. This finding is also consistent with a survey that has reported that the prevalence of the perception of abortion as a religious sin increased in Turkey from 40% in 2016 to 60% in 2019.[28] The increasing level of conservatism in the country and its reflections on health policies may have played a role in this result. Studies have shown that religious and cultural factors affect the acceptance and use of birth control methods in different ways and are among the reasons for increased fertility.[29-31]

In this study, the number of children considered ideal by the participating men and the number of children they currently have been higher than those in Turkey and the South-eastern Anatolia Region.[11] The men participating in the study have not yet reached the ideal number of male children they want. In an environment where there is such a high demand for fertility, they will likely achieve these goals unless there is a sudden change in life. However, although the mean number of siblings in men's own families of origin is eight, the number considered ideal by their generation has dropped to four, which is vital in showing social change and transformation. Also, interviews conducted with the participants revealed that although having many children is socially accepted, the challenging economic conditions compelled the couples to have fewer children compared to the couples in previous periods. Similarly, in Pakistan, it is stated that there is an intergenerational difference in the number of children due to economic reasons, men aged 35 years and under advocating earlier use of contraception and limit the number of children.[2] It is emphasized that men's limited understanding of family planning (FP) and harmful cultural gender norms pose obstacles to women's FP use in Uganda.[32]

The effect of the value attributed to the child on having children and on the number of children cannot be denied.[4] In the present study, it is determined that the economic value of the child is relatively high. The most important reason for this is the seasonal agricultural work. In seasonal agricultural work, children are the workers who are exposed to the harshest working conditions. Behind the problem lies household poverty; therefore, families need their children's labor in seasonal agricultural work. Children have to leave their school and migrate with their families to do seasonal agricultural work under harsh working conditions is an essential violation of children's rights.[33] Similarly, it is stated that men's decisions about family size were primarily perceived to be economical. At the same time, it was acknowledged that many families wanted larger families to provide labor in an agricultural economy in Pakistan.[2] It sees children as a valuable long-term investment tool in a life cycle in the poor rural areas of Etopia.[3]

However, household poverty requires the use of child labor, and the inclusion of child labor in the process, in turn, makes household poverty permanent. Children's participation in education and the duration they are involved in education are decreasing. As a result, they have less faith in the returns of education. Thus, the Province of Şanlıurfa maintains its feature as the Province that offers the most significant number of migrant seasonal agricultural workers.

The study found that the psychological, social, and economic value attributed to sons is higher than that of those attributed to daughters. This result is similar to those reported in the literature.[34,35] Especially in traditional societies, boys have a different status than girls, as they are regarded as the person who will continue the lineage and care for the elderly.[36] Also, in rural societies, men are perceived as the 'watchmen' of girls' honor.[37] Giving birth to a boy increases the value and status of women and men in society. It may even prevent the man from marrying more than one wife simultaneously, a process known as polygamy. For this reason, women continue to give birth until they give birth to a boy or a desired number of boys. Therefore, men do not want their wives to use contraceptive methods. This result was supported other study results.[38,39]

The Province of Şanlıurfa is a province where local traditional culture is still well-preserved. In this culture, having children, especially having a boy, is very important. Consistent with this, the study found that preference for male children is useful in the high fertility rates in the Province.

CONCLUSION

The men who participated in this study were found to have more than three children. In the qualitative dimension of this study, it was found that the most common factors increasing the number of children were "preference for male children, not knowing

enough about contraceptive methods, using child labor force in agriculture. "Also, it was found that men perceive induced abortion as a sin, the crowded family as powerful, and their sons as insurance in old age. This study has shown that education, cultural norms, and values are instrumental in the fertility rate. Therefore, these factors should be considered in the planning and delivery of services to reduce the high-risk pregnancies and births due to high fertility.

Difficulties and Limitations of The Research

It was challenging to communicate and gather detailed information because they are ashamed to speak on male participants' reproductive health issues. Verbal violent reactions were encountered in some interviews. Therefore, it may be possible that the participants did not give precise answers to some questions.

*The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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