
PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH

Are Married and Unmarried Yemeni People Differ in their Perception of Family Concept and its Function?

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ABSTRACT

Received	28 December 2017
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Introduction	In Yemen, conservative social traditions are the norms. Yemen has one of the highest population growth rate and the highest rate of unmet need for family planning (FP) in the world. This study aimed to explore the perception and attitude about family concept and its planning among married and unmarried people in selected Yemeni Governorates.
Methods	The study was conducted in April-May 2014 through house to house community-based cross-sectional survey with a purposively selected sample in 21 districts in 3 Yemeni governorates. The target population was Yemeni citizens aged 15+ years present in households in the targeted districts at the time of data collection. Married and un married respondents were approached equally with a pre-tested questionnaire and only consented respondents were enrolled.
Results	Analysis was done using the statistical package for Social Sciences version 22. Differences between married and unmarried respondents was tested by Chi squared test (χ^2). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The study involved 2217 respondents. Married and unmarried respondents were not different in their perception and attitude regarding family size, the negative influence of large family size, the relation of family size to children education and age at marriage, and some economic aspects in relation to large family size. However, they differently perceive the meaning of the family; reasons for establishing the family and for having children; decision makers for continuation of children education; reasons for postponing marriage, the influence of having too male children on increasing family income and on boosting father's prestige amongst others.
Conclusions	In conclusion, married and unmarried were not different in most of the addressed issues. The few differently perceived issues reflect differences in life experience, reality and social responsibilities. There is a need for further studies to monitor practices related to demographic changes over time in the Yemeni society.
Keywords	Perception - Family Concept - Family Function - Family Size - Married - Unmarried - Yemen.

INTRODUCTION

The family is a social institution that binds two or more individuals into a primary group to the extent that the members of the group are related to one another on the basis of blood relationships, affinity or some other symbolic network of association. It is an essential pillar upon which all societies are built and with such a character, has transcended time and space.¹ Studies find that women and couples who can decide on the number, spacing and timing of their children are better able to save resources, increase their household income, invest in their existing children, and better plan their lives.¹⁻³

The desired family size is one of the key factors in world population trends, and partially credits a shrinking number of children desired by women for the slowing in population growth.³ Obviously, trends in family size preferences have important implications for trends in fertility. Evidence in the literature suggests that FP programs lowered the number of births in developing countries by 40% between 1995 and 2000.⁴ The result is a significant decline the total fertility rate (TFR)—the average number of live births a woman would have during her lifetime, assuming constant fertility rate.⁵ Conceptually, fertility desires and intentions represent different constructs: desires (or preferences) reflect goals or ideals, while intentions incorporate plans for action and may be more responsive to personal circumstances and constraints.⁶

Yemen is the poorest countries in the Arab region. It faces daunting social, economic and security challenges simultaneously, and has limited natural resources, most notably scarcity of water and limited arable land which is only 2.91% of total land area.⁷ The population growth rate is one of the highest in the world, at 3%. Nearly half the population is below 15 years of age, and population growth has outpaced economic growth, with unsustainable levels of unemployment, estimated at 52.9% among the 15-24 age group, and 44.4% among the 25-59 years group.⁸ On the other hand, Yemen, has the highest rate of unmet need for FP of any country.⁵ Its population has doubled in less than twenty years, and it has the world's second-youngest population with high TFR which taxes Yemen's infrastructure, education and health systems, and environment.⁹ As evidenced by the 2011–2015 Yemeni National Reproductive Health Strategy (YNRHS), the Yemeni government recognizes the persistent high population growth as a real 'development threat', and thus lists it as one priority theme on its agenda. Yemen's challenge in regard to its reproductive health and family planning plans is twofold: (1) the communal unawareness on the significance of this particular subject to the individuals' and the nation's socioeconomic progress as well as the country's development as a whole; and (2) the poor

reproductive health and FP service provision, in terms of availability and accessibility.¹⁰

Yemeni population is expected to reach 38.8 million by 2025 and 68.1 million by 2050 if current rates continue. The youthful age structure – with 46% of the population under the age of 15 and therefore yet to enter reproductive age— means that the growth in total population is likely to continue, with critical implications for economic, social and environmental policy and planning. There are only enduring modest FP progress and some albeit not enough improvement in the TFR. The above indicators are obviously of particular concerns in the highly populated rural areas which have poor educational level.¹¹

The present study is part of a baseline assessment of an intervention project named "Small Family is my Choice" implemented by SOUL for Development – a Yemeni National Non-Governmental Organization and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (EKN) in Sana'a, Yemen in complies with both the YNRHS and the EKN Multi Annual Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (MASP), which identify Reproductive Health as one of their priority areas. This project is named Promoting Small-Family Norms (PSFN) in Yemen which adopts a different approach that mainly focuses on the individuals and family socioeconomic prosperity and national economic development. In particular, the project aims to raise public awareness and improve attitudes toward small family concept through correcting traditional misconception and connecting large family size in one hand with the quality of life of the family on the other hand. Specifically, the survey aimed to: Identify community perception about family concepts and function.

Provide information about the extent of community understanding of the relationship between "family size" on the one hand, and health, economic, societal and educational aspects for the family and its members on the other hand.

Provide baseline data to measure changes over time in the perceptions, attitude, and practices of the communities concerning FP and ideal family size.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study was conducted through a house to house community-based cross-sectional survey in the period April – May 2014.

Study Settings

This study was carried out in selected 22 districts of three governorates: Hadhramaut: 6 districts (4 rural+2 urban); Taiz: 8 districts (6 rural+2 urban); Sana'a: 8 districts (6 rural+2 urban). However, Hamdan district in Sana'a governorate was excluded due to poor security status to reach a total

of 21 districts. This focus is purposely sought so as to offer the project the chance for reaching a significant number of the population as selection of those districts has been based on the following criteria: (1) population density; (2) geographic location of each district to ensure the widest possible coverage for each governorate; (3) priority and focus on rural districts rather than urban ones; and (4) availability of the public, private and charity – based family planning health facilities. The three identified governorates represent three different Yemeni regions; this is useful to study the different social attitudes in the three different regions and hopefully come up with an applicable model in each of the three zones. Taiz and Sana'a are two population dense areas; Hadhramaut is strongly affected by religious anti-family planning concepts. In addition, the focus was on rural areas more than urban ones, which correspond with the Yemeni government –represented by the Ministry of Public Health and Population and the National Population Council realization that the rural and remote areas need more focus and attention in the government's strategies and plans.

Target Population

The target population was Yemeni citizens married and unmarried aged 15 years and above present in households in the 21 districts at the time of data collection. An eligible respondent in the visited household is: (1) Those permanently residing in the targeted districts at least two years prior to the survey; (2) Male or female, married or unmarried Yemeni citizens aged 15 years and above available in the selected households at the time of data collection; and (3) Provided their agreement and consent to participate in the study.

Sampling

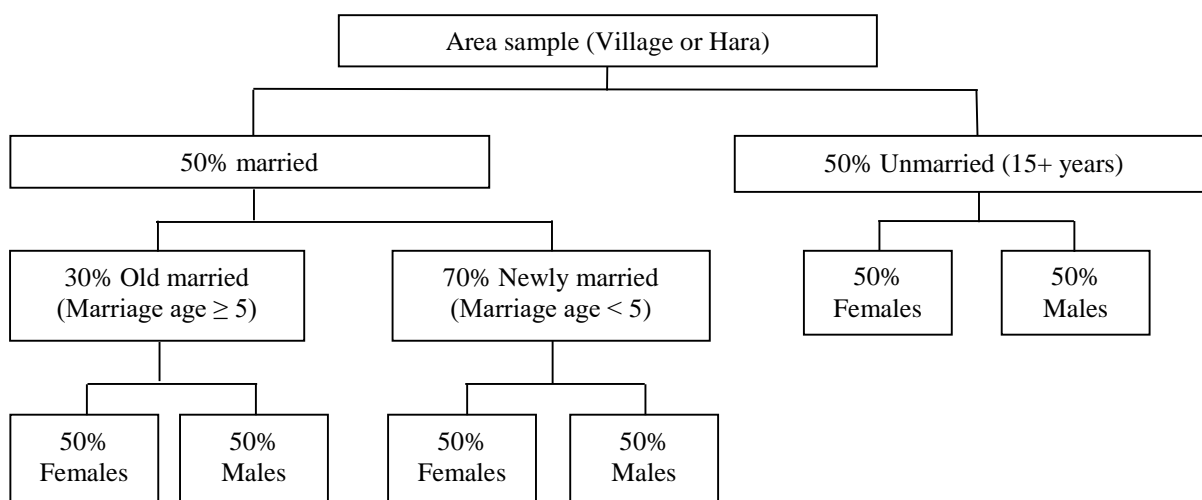
Sampling was done using non probability purposive sampling taking in consideration the population density and growth rate in each district. The selected 22 districts represented 28% of the total number of districts in the three governorates (79) and 14% of the total targeted communities. The formula used for the calculation of sample size was that of Steven Thompson.¹²

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1-p)}{\left[\left(N-1 \times \frac{d^2}{Z^2} \right) + p(1-p) \right]}$$

Where n is targeted population size in every district; Z is the certainty wanted, expressed in the percentage point of the normal distribution corresponding to the two sided level of significance (1.96 at 0.95); P is the percentage of FP utilization which was set at 50% to maximize the required sample size and d is the precision or error

allowable (0.05). With the above consideration, the calculated sample size was 2217 which was amounted to 1% of the size of targeted communities of 221719 inhabitants.¹³ Flow chart about sample distribution is shown in Figure 1 and details are available upon request.

Figure 1 Flow Chart of Sample Distribution



Data Collection

Data collection was done by 12 trained field researchers from the three governorates. A manual

for field work was prepared, distributed to the researchers and discussed with them to be sure that they became acquainted with the roles and

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responsibilities of each of the enumerator and field supervisor, details of fieldwork and ways to solve anticipated problems. Pre-testing was done in selected neighbourhoods that bear similarities to the targeted ones which were not included later in the sample. Field work was done immediately after pre-testing. Households were visited by a team of two members (male and female) under the supervision of a field supervisor. Daily revision of the collected questionnaires was performed for any mistakes or missing information that is corrected in the next days and before leaving the area. Households were included until the required number was reached in each district.

Study Instruments

A pretested questionnaire covering personal; social; health; and economic information was administered. Effort was made during literature review to ensure content validity. Furthermore, various drafts of the questionnaire were evaluated individually by sociologists and experts in public health to ensure face validity.

Statistical Analysis

Data entry and analysis were done using SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences-22 (SPSS Incorporation, Chicago, IL, USA). Numerical variables were tested by the mean and standard deviation (SD). Bivariate analysis for qualitative

variables was done using Chi squared test (χ^2). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Research Ethics

All participants were requested to give their written or oral informed consent after explaining the objectives of the study. The necessary permission for conducting the study was taken from the health offices in the governorates.

RESULT

The contribution of each governorate to the sample of 2217 was as follow: Sana'a 36.4% (806); Taiz 34.6% (768); and Hadramout 29.0% (643). There were 1122 married and 1095 unmarried people. Table 1, depicts no difference in sex distribution. However, there is a significant difference in age distribution with justifiable more unmarried (69.2%) in the youngest age group (<25) and the opposite among older age (77.7%). A significantly higher percentage of illiterate/just read and write and those having university degree were married (60.6% and 66.7% respectively) compared to their unmarried counterparts. On the other hand, students, capital owners and unemployed were mostly unmarried (95.3%, 82.7%, and 81.7%) respectively) whereas there were more married respondents in the clerk group (82.9%), those who were working on daily base (78.7%) and skilled workers group (71.4%) and the difference was statistically significant.

Table 1 Personal Characteristics by Marital Status (n=2217)

Characteristic	No. (%) [*]	Married (n=1122)		Unmarried (n=1095)		χ^2
		No.**	%	No.**	%	
Sex						
Female	1131(51.0)	566	50.0	565	50.0	0.295, P=0.587
Male	1086 (49.0)	556	51.2	530	48.8	
Age (years)						
<25	1280 (57.7)	394	30.8	886	69.2	500.938, P<0.001†
25+	937 (42.3)	728	77.7	209	22.3	
Mean ± SD		29.27±9.47		21.00±4.61		
Educational level						
Illiterate, read & write	109 (4.9)	66	60.6	43	33.4	22.95, P<0.001†
Basic school	698 (31.5)	353	50.6	345	49.4	
Secondary school	941 (42.4)	390	41.4	551	58.6	
University	469 (21.2)	313	66.7	156	33.3	
Job						
Work on daily basis	624 (28.1)	491	78.7	133	21.3	1013.007, P<0.001†
Public/private clerk	591 (26.7)	490	82.9	101	17.1	
Students	344 (15.5)	16	4.7	328	95.3	
Unemployed	344 (15.5)	63	18.3	281	81.7	
Capital owner	300 (13.6)	52	17.3	248	82.7	
Skilled worker	14 (0.6)	10	71.4	4	28.6	

* % were taken from column total; ** % were taken from row total; † Statistically significant

Table 2 shows a significant difference between married and unmarried respondents in the meaning of the family only in two answers: is a group of people in one shelter and home and responsibility where the first was mentioned more by unmarried respondents (59.5%) and the second by married respondents (61.0%); $P < 0.001$. On the other and, a significantly more married respondents attributed the reason for establishing the family to: it is the norm and to have a guardian (54.7% and 58.9% respectively); whereas a significantly more unmarried believe that the reason is because it is life (56.0%) and establishing community (52.6%).

Married and unmarried respondents were different in five dimensions of their perceived

reasons for having children; four of them were significantly higher among unmarried: working force (63.2%), raising generation (58.5%), for survival (57.1%) and for reproduction (55.9%), whereas married significantly indicated the beauty of life (59.0%). With regards to family size, the highest percentage had the perception that < 5 persons is considered as small size (2132 or 96.2%); and ideal family size (1490 or 67.2%). In the same context, 99.4% considered that a family size of 5 persons or more is large with insignificant difference between married and unmarried in the three questions.

Table 2 Perception about Family-Related Concepts by Marital Status (n=2217)

Characteristic	No. (%) [*]	Married (n=1122)		Unmarried (n=1095)		χ^2
		No.	% ^{**}	No.	% ^{**}	
Meaning of the family^{***}						
Husband, wife & children	1208 (54.5)	623	51.6	585	48.4	0.400, $P=0.237$
A group of people in one shelter	469 (21.2)	190	40.5	279	59.5	23.523, $P < 0.001$ †
Home & responsibility	346 (15.6)	211	61.0	135	39.0	18.297, $P < 0.001$ †
Life continuity	116 (5.2)	61	52.6	55	47.4	0.227, $P=0.634$
Love & security	85 (3.8)	46	54.1	39	45.9	0.480, $P=0.488$
Understanding & equality	120 (5.4)	66	55.0	54	45.0	1059, $P=0.304$
Reasons for establishing the family^{***}						
Establishing community	762 (34.4)	361	47.4	401	52.6	4.972, $P=0.026$ †
It is the norm	720 (32.5)	394	54.7	326	45.3	7.253, $P=0.007$ †
It is life	241 (10.9)	106	44.0	135	56.0	4.786, $P=0.029$ †
Religious obligation	199 (9.0)	108	54.3	91	45.7	1.660, $P=0.280$
Happiness	198 (8.9)	93	47.0	105	53.0	1.165, $P=0.285$
To have a guardian	141 (6.4)	83	58.9	58	41.1	4.098, $P=0.043$ †
Chasteness	102 (4.6)	51	50.0	51	50.0	0.308, $P=0.579$
Reasons for having children^{***}						
The beauty of life	903 (40.7)	533	59.0	370	41.0	45.052, $P < 0.001$ †
For parent's future guardianship	440 (19.8)	219	49.8	221	50.2	0.104, $P=0.747$
For raising generations	388 (17.5)	161	41.5	227	58.5	15.176, $P < 0.001$ †
For reproduction	213 (9.6)	94	44.1	119	55.9	3.781, $P=0.042$ †
For survival	210 (9.5)	90	42.9	120	57.1	5.373, $P=0.020$ †
For heritage	91 (4.1)	39	42.9	52	57.1	2.195, $P=0.138$
Working force	76 (3.4)	28	36.8	48	63.2	5.841, $P=0.016$ †
Small Family Size						
< 5	2132 (96.2)	1084	50.8	1048	49.2	1.232, $P=0.267$
5+	85 (3.8)	38	46.3	47	53.7	
Large Family Size						
< 5	14 (0.6)	10	71.4	4	28.6	
5+	2203 (99.4)	1112	50.5	1091	49.5	3.110, $P=0.219$
Ideal Family Size						
< 5	1490 (67.2)	765	51.3	725	48.7	
5+	727 (32.8)	357	49.1	370	50.9	0.980, $P=0.613$

* % were taken from column total; ** % were taken from row total; *** % cannot be summed to 100% due to multiple responses; † Statistically significant

The perception of the negative influence of large family size on different life spheres was also investigated and the findings are demonstrated in

Table 3. The great majority believe that there is negative effect of large family size on family health (92.5%), economic status (95.2%), family

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educational level (91.9%), and family life within and outside the family (93.7%) with insignificant difference between married and unmarried respondents. Likewise, no significant difference was

found in the six reasons to indicate who is most influenced by large family size with mother and father were indicated as the most influenced (73.5% and 70.1% respectively).

Table 3 Perception of the Negative Influence of Large Family Size by Marital Status (n=2217)

Characteristic	No. (%) [*]	Married (n=1122)		Unmarried (n=1095)		χ^2
		No.	% ^{**}	No.	% ^{**}	
On family health	2050 (92.5)	1039	50.7	1011	49.3	0.063, P=0.795
On economic aspects	2111 (95.2)	1063	50.4	1048	49.6	1.136, P=0.286
On the family, educational level	2038 (91.9)	1033	50.7	1005	49.3	0.061, P=0.804
Causes problems within and outside the family	2077 (93.7)	1060	51.0	1017	49.0	2.390, P=0.122
Who is most influenced by large family size ^{***}						
Mother	1629 (73.5)	832	51.1	797	48.9	0.532, P=0.466
Father	1555 (70.1)	797	51.3	758	48.7	0.867, P=0.352
Newborn	1138 (51.3)	580	51.0	558	49.0	0.120, P=0.729
Family	757 (34.1)	403	53.2	354	46.8	3.175, P=0.075
Country	642 (29.0)	324	50.5	318	49.5	0.007, P=0.932
Community	612 (27.6)	309	50.5	303	49.5	0.005, P=0.945

* % were taken from column total; ** % were taken from row total; *** % cannot be summed to 100% due to multiple responses; † Statistically significant

Table 4 shows how sample members perceived the relation between family size and children's education. The great majority agreed that better education would lead to better future among male children (99.7%) and female children (97.8%). Nonetheless, 51.3% and 48.0% agree that continuing education will lead to postponing marriage among males and females respectively. No significant difference was observed between married and unmarried in the above education – related variables. On the other hand, significantly

more married participants mentioned father (52.0%); whereas more unmarried participants mentioned the person himself (62.7%) as the decision maker for the continuation of education. On the other hand, four reasons for postponing marriage were indicated; on the top was maturity and accountability (67.2%) with significant difference between married and unmarried in one reason (better education) which was mentioned more by unmarried participants (56.1%).

Table 4 Perception of the Relation of Family Size to Children's Education and Age at Marriage by Marital Status (n=2217)

Characteristic	No. (%) [*]	Married (n=1122)		Unmarried (n=1095)		χ^2
		No.	% ^{**}	No.	% ^{**}	
Better education would lead to better future among male children	2211 (99.7)	1119	50.6	1092	49.4	0.005, P=0.945
Better education would lead to better future among female children	2168 (97.8)	1100	50.7	1068	49.3	0.654, P=0.419
Continuing education will lead to postponing marriage among males (n=2120)	1087 (51.3)	548	50.4	539	49.6	0.402, P=0.526
Continuing education will lead to postponing marriage among females (n=1993)	952 (48.0)	498	52.3	454	47.7	0.445, P=0.505
Decision maker for the continuation of education ^{***}						

Father	1937 (87.4)	1007	52.0	930	48.0	10.747, P=0.001†
Mother	884 (39.9)	474	53.6	410	46.4	5.099, P=0.024
Person himself	204 (9.2)	76	37.3	128	62.7	16.203, P<0.001†
Community	14 (0.6)	8	57.1	6	42.9	0.236, P=0.627
Extended family	11 (0.5)	4	36.4	7	63.6	0.906, P=0.341
Reasons for postponing marriage***						
Maturity & accountability	1490 (67.2)	752	50.5	738	49.5	0.018, P=0.893
Better health	522 (23.5)	272	52.1	250	47.9	0.648, P=0.421
Better education	344 (15.5)	151	43.9	193	56.1	7.265, P=0.007†
Better financial status	294 (13.3)	148	50.3	146	49.7	0.007, P=0.933

* % were taken from column total; ** % were taken from row total; *** % cannot be summed to 100% due to multiple responses; † Statistically significant

Six attitude attributes related to economic aspects are demonstrated in Table 5. Two thousand hundred and five participants (95.0 %) believe that having too many children will result in increased population size. On the other hand, 91.8% admitted that there is negative influence with large family size on individual's self-development with insignificant difference between the two groups in the two attributes. More married participants agree that too many male children will increase family income (56.6%) than those who believe that too many female children will do that (27.6%). For male children, the difference was statistically

significant where more unmarried believe in that (52.7%). For too many female children influence, no significant difference was detected by marital status. In a related context, more participants believe that too many male children will boost father's prestige amongst others (70.0%) than those who believe on the effect of having too many female children (27.8%) but the difference between the two groups was statistically significant only for the influence of too male children with a higher percentage among unmarried compared to married participants (51.3% vs 48.7%).

Table 5 Economic Related Perception by Marital Status (n=2217)

Characteristic	No. (%)*	Married (n=1122)		Unmarried (n=1095)		χ^2
		No.	%**	No.	%**	
Too many children will result in increased population size	2105 (95.0)	1062	50.0	1043	49.5	0.414, P=0.520
Large family size has negative effect on individual's self-development	2035 (91.8)	1032	50.7	1003	49.3	0.106, P=0.744
Too many male children will increase family income	1254 (56.6)	593	47.3	661	52.7	12.732, P<0.001†
Too many female children will increase family income	612 (27.6)	300	49.0	321	51.0	0.854, P=0.355
Too many male children will boosts father's prestige amongst others	1553 (70.0)	757	48.7	796	51.3	7.212, P=0.007†
Too many female children will boosts father's prestige amongst others	617 (27.8)	307	49.8	310	50.2	0.248, P=0.618

* % were taken from column total; ** % were taken from row total; *** % cannot be summed to 100% due to multiple responses; † Statistically significant

DISCUSSION

In the present study, around half (54.5%) of the respondents considered family as a husband, wife and children followed by 21.1% who considered it a group of people in one shelter which together is in alignment with this notion. This is in accordance with what indicated by Wetzel¹⁴ in his view of the families as the the quintessential institution of the community and the nation, providing both biological and social continuity as they

simultaneously shape and are shaped by the larger society. Families also are the locus of consumption, saving and some production activities that are vital to overall economic well-being, and they bear special responsibilities of nurturing and educating the future Nations' work force. In accordance with this thought, 66.9% believe that the reasons for establishing the family are establishing community and being a norm.

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Parenthood and childlessness is a central life goal in most societies. At personal level, there is a scale parenthood motives.¹⁵ Literature shows wide range of motives of having and not having children ranging from very positive to very negative ones and from the folk perspective to the empirical evidence with a great deal of conflicting evidence.¹⁶ The transition to parenthood has gained a lot of attention in recent societal and scholarly debates.¹⁷ While some scholars showed that parenthood and childlessness predict great emotional advantages,¹⁸⁻²⁰ a number of scholars provided opposite arguments.²¹⁻²³ In the present discussion, the focus will be on the positive aspects of parenthood as it is in line with the general construct of this study which shows that the first ranking reasons for having children was the premise that children are the beauty of life (40.7%), for parent future guardianship (19.8%) and for raising generations (17.5%). Sizable literature had reached comparable conclusion including the earlier study by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973)²⁴, about the value of children, passing through the study by Diener & Fujita (1995);²⁵ Lucas et al. (1996)²⁶ and the most recent findings by Bruno in 2015.²⁷

Alongside the debate surrounding what means a family, reasons for establishing it and reasons for parenthood is the question about family size. Family size may be influenced by a host of factors such as social, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental factors.²⁸ Family size largely depends on the number of children the family has. The latest National Yemeni Health and Demographic Survey, 2014 shows that the total fertility rate (TFR) or the number of children a woman would have by the end of her childbearing years was an average of 4.4 children in her lifetime.²⁹ In the present study, a family with five children or above is considered to be of large size which is in line with the national average TFR. The great majority of the respondents also agreed (99.4%). The same cut-of value was also considered by Arthur in Ghana where the majority of families had small size.³⁰ In the present sample, the majority considered having less than 5 children contributes to small family size (96.2%). Likewise, around two thirds (67.2%) also considered it an ideal family size with insignificant difference between married and unmarried respondents in all the three attributes (Table 2).

Sizable literature addressed the negative implications of large family size. Most of the negativities are based on the resources dilution theory which indicates that resources are diluted within families that have more children. This explanation posits that parents have finite levels of resources and that these resources are diluted among children as sibship size increases.³¹ Such negativities are obvious with respect to general

family wellbeing,³² health,^{33,34} and economic aspects.³⁵ This definitely culminates into poor health, lower incomes, lower social life as well as economic life.^{36,37} All such negativities were agreed upon by the majority of the sample with percentages that are not different among married and unmarried participants (Table 3).

Education is the key to success and can open many doors and opportunities in life that can help reaching goals. Evidence shows that, on average, each additional year of education boosts a person's income by 10 per cent and increases a country's GDP by 18%.³⁸ The majority of the studied respondents had positive perception about the role of education for better future (99.7% and 97.8% for males and females respectively). On the other hand, only half of respondents (51.3% for males and 48.0% for females) has the perception that rise in educational attainment particularly among girls has positive association with age at marriage as has been proved in some countries.³⁹⁻⁴¹

The size of the family is a matter of great importance not only for the welfare and health of the individual, the family and the community but also for the country as a whole.³⁰ Perception of this notion by the majority of respondents is clear in the present study (Table 4). However, higher percentages had the perception that too many male children will increase family income (56.6%) and will boosts father's prestige amongst others (70.0%) than the comparable figures for having too many female children (27.6% and 27.8% respectively). This is in line with what is reported about Yemen traditional conservative attitude associated with lower women status as appeared in the last positions Yemen is ranking in the Gender, Inequality Index (159/159) and Global Gender Gap Index (144/144).⁴²

Obviously, differences in the perception of the two arms of the study respondents reflect in one way or another the stance of each group based on its experience and social responsibilities. Unmarried respondents tend to view family as a mean of social stability. That is why more unmarried view the family as a group of people in one shelter and the reason for establishing the family was perceived as establishing the community and as the life itself. On the other hand, married perception reflects life experience as more married viewed family as home and responsibility and the reason for establishing family as being the norm and to have a guardian. This is almost the same trend explaining the difference between married and unmarried respondents in the perception about the reasons for having children (Table 2).

There is agreement by marital status (no significant difference) on the negative influence of large family size (Table 3). Such agreement was also noticed in the education-related perception.

Both, married and unmarried were not different in the perception that better education would lead to better future among male and female children or the influence of continuing education on postponing marriage among male or female children. Worth mentioning that attributing father as the decision maker for the continuation of education was mentioned more by married respondents whereas the person himself as the responsible person was pointed out by the unmarried is another expression of different stance based on life experience. Another dimension where married and unmarried was significantly different is the perception of the reason for postponing marriage in which more unmarried referred the reason to looking for better education which could be a reflection of the reality of many unmarried.

CONCLUSION

Overall perception regarding family related concepts, its size and wellbeing is mostly in accordance with international literature. However, married and unmarried were not different in most of the addressed issues. The few differently perceived issues reflects differences in life experience, reality and social responsibilities. Family related concepts and functions should be addressed in any community – based educational programs. There is a need for further studies to monitor practices related to demographic changes over time in the Yemeni society.

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