

The Association of Family Structure with Fertility among Muslims: Evidence from the three Asian Countries

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Introduction

In the recent past, the mystery of the reproductive behaviour of the Muslims has been a debatable issue among the researchers. Muslims of the different parts of the world do not behave in any similar fashion in terms of their reproductive behaviour. In order to explain the variation in fertility of Muslims, it is important to study extensively, the factors that may influence the reproductive behaviour of the community. Family structure is one of the most important cultural factors that can influence the reproductive behavior of the community. Reproduction takes place within the family, and fertility is affected by the combination of events occurring within and shaped by the prevailing family system in a society (Karim, 1974). The existing literature suggests that the effect of family structure on fertility has been debated among the researchers but the findings of their studies differ in different set ups. Some of the authors have found the evidence that the joint family promotes the higher fertility for women (Davis 1955; Davis and Blake 1956; Stycos 1958). While others have argued that in a joint family structure there are fertility depressing factors present which tend to limit the fertility of the women (Nag 1967; Pakrasi and Malaker 1967; Stokes 1973; Berbarta 1966). In a review of such studies, Burch and Gendell (1970) wrote that there is no

empirical evidence found that the societies that have a predominated joint family structure also have the higher fertility. This study mainly focuses on assessing the effects of family structure on the reproductive behaviour of the Muslim community in the selected countries so that some concrete understanding of the issue can be establish.

Data and Methods

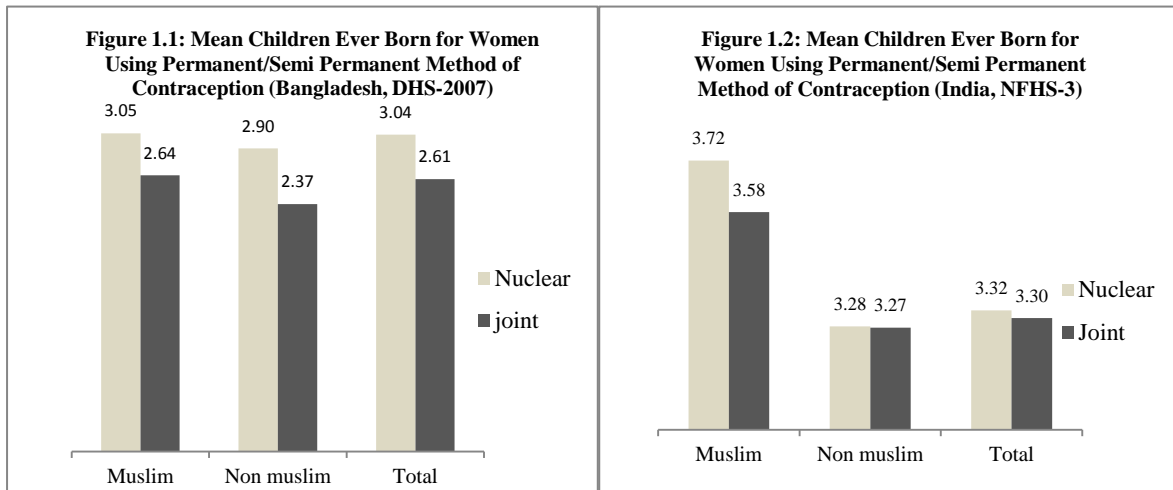
To examine the effects of family structure on fertility among Muslims three countries were selected namely-India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. The selection of the countries has been done very systematically. These three out of top five Muslim populous countries are selected. For these countries, the data has been used from the fifth round of Demographic and Health Survey of the respective countries.

To show the fertility levels of the selected countries mean children ever born has been taken as the proxy indicator of current fertility levels. The mean children ever born for women using permanent/semi-permanent (male & female sterilization as permanent and IUD and pills as semi-permanent) method of contraception can be used as a proxy indicator of completed fertility. Cross tabulation of mean children ever born according to family structure and religion by different socio economic and demographic characteristics has been carried out for each selected country. Finally, the path analysis has been carried out using the structural equation modelling for testing the direct, as well as the indirect effects of the family structure on fertility of Muslim women.

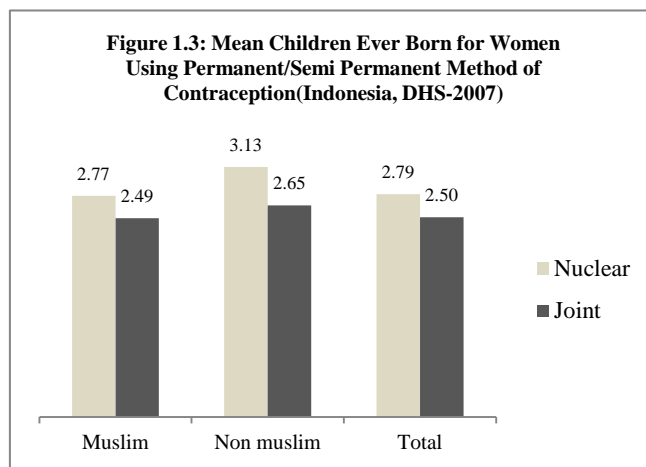
Results and Discussion

Figures 1.1 to 1.3 represent the mean children ever born for women using permanent/semi-permanent (male & female sterilization as permanent and IUD and pills as semi-permanent) method of contraception, according to family structure and religion for each selected country. In Bangladesh, a substantial difference in mean children ever born is observed between the

women living in joint family and nuclear family in all categories whereas in India this difference is negligible except for Muslims. In Indonesia this difference is higher among non-Muslims. With increase in women's education level and the household's wealth quintile the mean children ever born shows a gradual decline for all the countries.



For better understanding of the effect of the family structure on fertility, path analysis is carried out taking children ever born as the principle dependent variable and family structure as the principle independent variable for



understanding family structure analysis is children ever born as the dependent variable for

Muslims of each country. Figure 1.4 shows the hypothesized path model, fitted using SPSS AMOS 21 software.

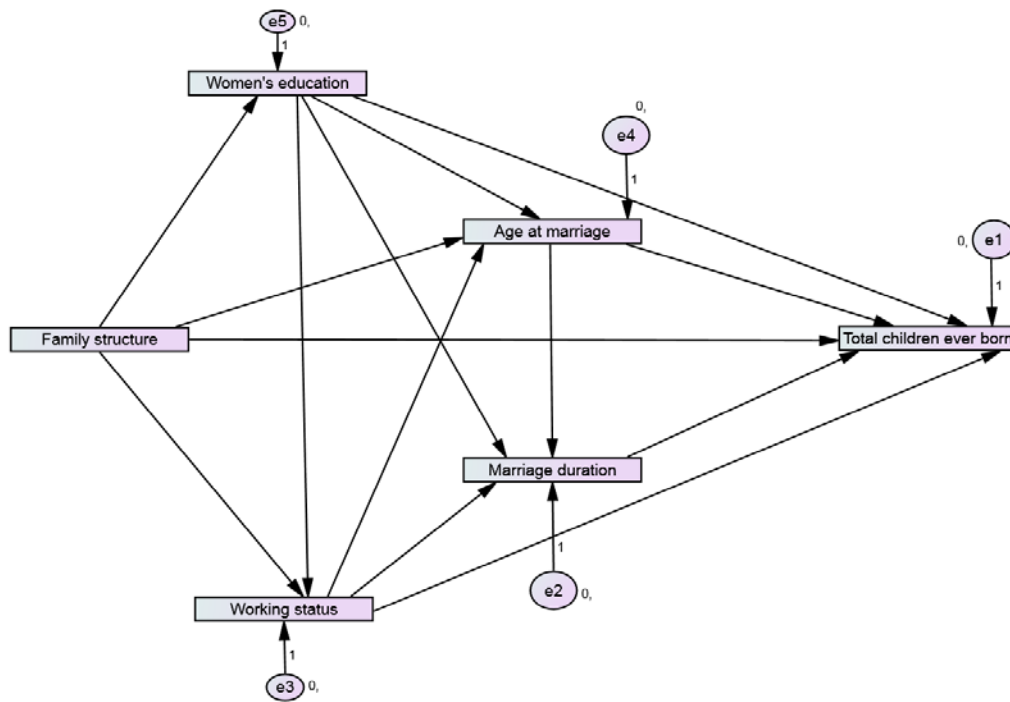


Figure 1.4: Hypothesized Path Model between Family Structure and Fertility

The results of the path analysis show that the family structure is associated with fertility of Muslim women in each selected country. The effect of family structure is least observed in Indonesia and highest in Bangladesh. The hypothesis that the nuclear family is positively associated with fertility for Muslims is thus supported by the results of this study.

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