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Work Status of Women and Marital Fertility in Four Muslim Populations

Introduction

STUDIES concerning the impact of labour force participation on fertility suggest that working women have lower fertility than their non-working counterparts (Devanzo, 1972; United Nations, 1973). This inverse relationship is well established in industrial societies (Whelpton *et al.*, 1966; Weller, 1977). But in less developed countries, several writers have shown that a clear negative relationship between work participation of women and fertility is often lacking and where present is typical only of small sub-groups of women (Jaffe and Azumi, 1960; Stycos, 1965; Stycos and Weller, 1967; Goldstein, 1972). For women in the less developed countries, the problem of lack of opportunity in the monetized sector of the economy coupled with the absence of any reliable measure to estimate their contribution to the family income has rendered the analysis more difficult (United Nations, 1975). Moreover, the value of their time is mostly not recorded in terms of income. Women in such societies start working fairly early in life, but the definition of work varies from one society to another (Durand, 1975). It has been suggested that some of the factors influencing the work status/fertility relationship are: type of occupation, level of earning, sector of the economy, provision for child care, degree of commitment to non-family employment (Germain, 1975; Dixon, 1976; Chaudhury, 1979).

In an attempt to explain how employment of women may influence fertility, Stycos and Weller (1967) first suggested that it is role incompatibility or role conflict that is important in determining the impact of work status of women

on fertility. According to this theory, the stronger the conflict between a woman's role as worker and mother, the more she will be likely to limit her fertility. This may be one of the reasons why work status and fertility have not been found to be inversely related in many of the developing countries, because most of the women in developing countries work in agricultural pursuits or in jobs where they can look after the child while working: this is especially true in a rural agricultural setting. It is also expected that working women, especially in the modern sector of the economy, will be better educated and of higher socio-economic status, and more of them than non-working women will use contraceptives to regulate their fertility.

Rodriguez and Cleland (1981) in an analysis of WFS data for 20 developing countries found significant differences in fertility by employment status of women in two-thirds of the sample populations; the employed women had lower fertility than non-employed ones, even after controlling for residence, wife's education and husband's socio-economic status. United Nations Population Division, on the other hand, by analysing WFS data for the same 20 developing countries found that contraceptive use was only slightly higher among employed women than among the unemployed ones (United Nations, 1980). Lightbourne and Singh concluded that "if women working outside the home are not more likely to use contraception than non-working women, their lower fertility may not be entirely voluntary; that is, employment may be the result of infertility or smaller family size rather than a cause of reduced fertility" (Lightbourne and Singh; 1982 : 24).

In the context of our study populations where sex segregation and domination of males over females are common and women's work outside the home is not generally socially and culturally highly valued, we hypothesize that working women, as a privileged group, will have lower fertility than their non-working counterparts.

Data Source

The populations used in this study are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan. Information on fertility as well as work status of the women before and after marriage was collected in these populations as part of the World Fertility Survey programme in the mid-1970s.

In the core questionnaire of the World Fertility Survey work was defined to be any work other than housework including work on the family farm; the definition also included work that was paid for in cash or in kind as well as unpaid work. Indonesia and Jordan asked all the core questions on work history of the women. In Bangladesh, only if the woman was paid in cash was she defined as working. Pakistan did not include work on the farm in the definition of work who, however, would mostly be family farm workers in any case. Thus the 'work status' variable differs considerably in the definition among

the selected populations. Employment was identified as before and after marriage, but there is little, if any, further evidence of the timing of employment experience. This information is important for any in-depth analysis to disentangle the complex nature of the relationship between female employment and fertility. It might seem reasonable to assume that, in societies where most women do not take up employment for wages or otherwise, outside home, the simple distinction between having worked and not having worked would probably isolate those women whose fertility may have been influenced by employment. The correspondence between the nature of recent and past employment may be close enough for the more general purpose of the analysis (Casterline, 1980).

For the purpose of our analysis, respondents who are currently married and still in their first marriage have been selected, because of the wide variation in the extent of marriage dissolutions among the selected countries (Ahmad, 1984). We have also considered only those respondents who were reported to be Muslims in Bangladesh and Jordan (information on religion was collected in these two populations), all respondents from Pakistan (97 per cent of the population are Muslim), and respondents from the island of Java only in Indonesia (the survey was conducted in the islands of Java and Bali, and about 95 per cent of the population in Bali are non-Muslims). The total number of currently married women aged 15-49 still in first marriage selected for our analysis was 3979 in Bangladesh, 5078 in Java, 3148 in Jordan and 4436 in Pakistan. Of the selected women 0.1 and 0.2 per cent did not state their work status before marriage and after marriage respectively in Pakistan and thus were excluded from the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Mean number of children born in the five years preceding the survey to married women still in first marriage reveals a weak but inverse relationship between work status and fertility in Bangladesh and Jordan, but a strong inverse relationship in Java, and no clear relationship in Pakistan (Table 1). In Bangladesh and Jordan, except in the two extreme age groups, fertility is lower among women who worked after marriage than among those who did not work. In Java, working women have lower mean number of children than non-working women in all the age groups, but working women in Pakistan do not seem to differ in their current fertility from their non-working counterparts (Table 1).

Total marital fertility rates also reveal that women who did not work after marriage have almost the same levels of fertility in Bangladesh and Java. But the highest fertility among this group of women is in Jordan followed by Pakistan. Similarly, among women who were reported to have worked after marriage, the highest fertility is evident in Jordan followed by Pakistan,

TABLE 1—MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN IN THE FIVE YEARS PRECEDING THE SURVEY OF CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN STILL IN FIRST MARRIAGE, BY WORK AFTER MARRIAGE AND AGE

Work Status	*Current Age* (in years)							*Total Marital Fertility Rate*
	15-19	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	
1. Did not work								
Bangladesh ($N = 3609$)	0.8	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.6	0.3	7.2
Java ($N = 2133$)	0.8	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.0	0.7	0.3	7.3
Jordan ($N = 2745$)	0.9	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.7	1.1	0.4	10.3
Pakistan ($N = 3642$)	0.6	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.2	0.8	0.2	7.6
2. Worked								
Bangladesh ($N = 370$)	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	6.9
Java ($N = 2946$)	0.5	1.3	1.3	1.1	0.8	0.4	0.2	5.6
Jordan ($N = 403$)	1.2	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.1	0.5	9.9
Pakistan ($N = 785$)	0.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.3	0.8	0.2	7.8
Ratio : $\frac{\text{Did not work}}{\text{Worked}} \times 100$								
Bangladesh	89	107	114	108	122	86	75	104
Java	160	115	123	127	125	174	150	131
Jordan	75	118	105	111	113	100	80	104
Pakistan	86	100	106	94	92	100	100	97

Bangladesh and Java. It is important to note that the total marital fertility rate among women who worked after marriage is substantially (1.7 children) lower than that of their non-working counterparts only in Java. In the other three populations, the difference between the two groups is very small, not exceeding 0.4 child.

Mean number of children even born to married women still in first marriage, by work status after marriage and duration of marriage, is presented in Table 2. No clear cut pattern in the work-status/fertility relationship is noticeable, except in Java, where a strong inverse relationship is evident. Women who had worked after marriage had lower mean number of children ever born in all the duration groups than women who did not work.

TABLE 2—MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN TO CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN AGED 15-49 STILL IN FIRST MARRIAGE, BY WORK STATUS OF WOMEN AFTER MARRIAGE AND DURATION OF MARRIAGE

Work Status	*Duration of Marriage* (in years)						
	0-4	*5-9*	*10-14*	*15-19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30+*
1. Did not Work							
Bangladesh	0.7	2.1	3.9	5.5	6.7	7.8	7.7
Java	1.0	2.7	4.2	5.6	6.4	7.4	7.6
Jordan	1.2	3.5	5.7	7.3	8.5	9.8	10.4
Pakistan	0.7	2.6	4.2	5.7	6.9	7.3	7.5
2. Worked							
Bangladesh	0.8	2.3	3.6	5.7	6.5	7.5	7.2
Java	0.8	2.2	3.5	4.7	5.7	6.1	6.7
Jordan	1.6	3.2	5.3	6.7	8.6	9.7	10.1
Pakistan	0.6	2.4	4.1	5.9	7.0	7.3	8.3
Ratio : $\frac{\text{Did not work}}{\text{Worked}} \times 100$							
Bangladesh	88	91	108	96	103	104	107
Java	125	123	120	119	112	121	113
Jordan	92	109	108	109	99	101	103
Pakistan	117	108	102	97	99	100	90

In all the other countries, the differences at individual work status categories are marginal, mostly less than 0.3 child; the prevailing direction of the difference, is, however, for non-working women to have slightly higher fertility than those who are working. The inverse relationship between work status and

fertility is thus supported by data only from Java. In Jordan, fertility is lower among working women than non-working women only at duration of marriage of less than 20 years; at higher durations, the effect of work on fertility seems to be negligible. A similar pattern was reported in the United States (Kupinsky, 1971) and in Thailand (Goldstein, 1972). This is probably due to the fact that among women in the early peak of childbearing, participation in the labour force is more incompatible with fertility than it is among older women. It may also indicate that non-familial participation in the labour force has only a temporary effect on fertility, rather than having a permanent effect upon completed fertility (Kupinsky, 1971; Goldstein, 1972).

Considering the mean number of children ever born to women at duration of marriage of 25-29 years as completed fertility, it can be seen that women who worked after marriage have only 0.3 child less than their non-working counterparts in Bangladesh. In Jordan and Pakistan, both the groups have similar levels of fertility (Table 2). Chaudhury (1978) found no significant difference in fertility between working and non-working women in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, even after controlling for variables such as age, education, conjugal relationship, work experience, husband's income, duration of marriage and age at marriage. Shah and Smith (1981) from the analysis of the Pakistan Fertility Survey data also found no significant difference between fertility of working and non-working women, which according to the authors is due to the fact that about two-thirds of the working women worked at home, and, hence, working did not conflict with their roles as mother and wife.

It is also important to know whether previous work experience before marriage in conjunction with or independent of work status after marriage has any effect on fertility. It is to be expected that women worked before as well as after marriage would be those who developed more interest in extra-familial activities or became more career oriented than women who worked only after marriage. Hence we hypothesize that women who worked before as well as after marriage will have lower fertility than those who worked only after marriage or those who did not work at all.

The analysis of variance is employed to test the effect of work status of women before and after marriage on the mean number of children ever born. Duration of marriage, duration of marriage square and age at marriage are considered as covariates. The results, presented in the Appendix, show that the effect of work status on fertility is statistically significant only in Java.

The results of Multiple Classification Analysis are presented in Table 3. The comparison of *eta* and *beta* values reveals that, when adjusted for the covariates, the effect of work status on fertility is reduced in Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan. But in Java, the *beta* value suggests that the covariates suppress the effect of work status on fertility. However, the Multiple *R*-squared values show that work status explains only a negligible amount of variation in ferti-

TABLE 3—UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN TO CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN AGED 15-49 STILL IN FIRST MARRIAGE, BY WORK STATUS OF WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER MARRIAGE

Work Status before and after Marriage	*Bangladesh*			*Java*			*Jordan*			*Pakistan*		
	N	*Unadjusted CEB*	*Adjusted CEB*	*N*	*Unadjusted CEB*	*Adjusted CEB*	*N*	*Unadjusted CEB*	*Adjusted CEB*	*N*	*Unadjusted CEB*	*Adjusted CEB*
DW-DW	3573	4.13	4.19	1662	3 59	4.03	2445	5.59	5.53	3541	4.15	4.24
W-DW		*		471	3.40	4.07	301	5.08	5.55	113	4.24	4.46
DW-W	323	4.85	4.06	1038	4.09	4.46	127	6 38	5.20	477	5.33	4.27
W-W	49	3.71	4.00	1908	3.57	3.37	275	4.85	5.46	305	4.11	4.24
Eta/Beta		0.07	0.01		0 08	0.11		0.08	0.02		0.13	0.01
Multiple *R*-Squared		0.005	0.66		0.006	0.57		0.007	0.71		0.016	0.61
Grand Mean		4.18			3.67			5.51			4.25	

Note. *Less than 25 cases.
DW = Did not Work, W = Worked.
Adjustment was done by using MCA with duration of marriage, duration of marriage square and age at first marriage as covariates.

lity, it is the covariates that explain most of it in all the four populations.

It is also clear from the analysis that in all the populations except Java, only a small percentage of women have worked before and after marriage : one per cent in Bangladesh, but 38 per cent in Java, 8.7 per cent in Jordan and 6.9 per cent in Pakistan. Unfortunately, from the available data the duration of work could not be ascertained.

Women who did not work at all have almost similar levels of fertility in Bangladesh, Java and Pakistan. The difference in fertility between Java and the remaining three populations is more pronounced among women who were reported to have worked after marriage, irrespective of their work status before marriage (Table 3).

In Java where the work status categories differ significantly in their fertility, it is evident that women who did not work after marriage, irrespective of their work status before marriage, show almost similar levels of fertility. On the other hand, those who worked before and after marriage have the lowest fertility followed by those who worked only after marriage (Table 3).

The reason for the absence of any significant relationship between work status and fertility in the three populations probably lies in the fact that the women are mostly engaged in many of the traditional jobs which are compatible with child care; the mother can watch her children while working, and sometimes can take breaks to breastfeed the baby. This point is borne out partly by looking at some of the characteristics of working women in these populations.

Among women who worked before as well as after marriage, only 15 per cent in Bangladesh, 17 per cent in Java, 40 per cent in Jordan and about 7 per cent in Pakistan have 6 or more years of education. On the other hand, of the women who are working now but did not before marriage, 5 per cent in Bangladesh, about 20 per cent in Java, 29 per cent in Jordan and about 3 per cent in Pakistan have 6 or more years of education.

Of women who reported having worked before as well as after marriage, 61 per cent in Bangladesh, 80 per cent in Java, about 50 per cent in Jordan and 70 per cent in Pakistan are currently residing in rural areas. In addition, of the women working now but not before marriage, more than 75 per cent in Bangladesh, 70 per cent in Java, more than half in Jordan and more than 60 per cent in Pakistan are currently residing in rural areas.

It is thus clear that except in Jordan, the overwhelming majority of the working women in these populations have a very low level of education, as might be expected, because the overall level of education of women is low, and most of them reside in the rural areas. Because of their low education, they can get jobs only in the traditional sector of the economy and mostly in agriculture and related occupations that do not need much skill or technical know-how. Working outside the home may be compatible with child care in such situations and raising children may be performed simultaneously with work. Even

in the urban areas, the comparatively few highly educated women who work outside the home may not find work and child care incompatible because other family members, such as the mother-in-law, or maid servants may take care of the children while the mother works.

Moreover, as the characteristics of the working women suggest, most probably they come from low status low income families. Thus, most of them probably work not to raise their social status or personal standard of living but rather to supplement family income for survival. Chaudhury (1978) in a metropolitan urban area of Bangladesh found that married working women came from low income and low status families; economic reasons were the principal motivating factor to find a paid job outside the home. In such situations, the income that women derive from their work may be too low for them to feel economically independent. In a male dominated society, regardless of their working status, women remain socially and economically dependent on men. Ultimately, women in these societies cannot translate their work and earnings into power; often, in fact, working women have less power and autonomy than women who do not work (Safilios-Rothschild, 1982). These are probably some of the reasons for the absence of the expected relationship between work status and fertility in most of these populations.

The case of Java is an exception. Not only do large percentage of married women in Java work outside the home, but also many of them work with their husbands as a team. Moreover, the position of women in Java in relation to other Muslim societies is more favourable in that women do not suffer from the restrictions of purdha; they have the right to own and inherit property and to engage in financial dealings; they are guaranteed equal pay for equal work and other protection under labour laws (Hull, 1975 : 106). Moreover, in the event of divorce, individually held property, that is property brought into the marriage by each partner, is taken back by its owner and also property acquired jointly since marriage is divided among the partners (Geertz, 1961; Hull, 1975). A working woman in Java thus has greater control over her earnings and consequently over the property; this, in turn, puts her in a better position in decision making, and makes her less dependent on her husband and children for security. All this might have contributed to the comparatively low level of actual fertility among working women in Java.

It is also important to know whether working women in these populations differ in their breastfeeding practices and use of efficient methods of contraception from their non-working counterparts. It is to be expected that if work and child rearing are incompatible, then working women will breastfeed for a shorter period. Secondly, if working women derive more pleasure from their work than from bearing and rearing children, then they will try to control their fertility through greater use of efficient methods of contraception.

While in Bangladesh a working woman breastfeed her penultimate child for 21.7 months, her non-working counterpart breastfed for 21.8 months; the

corresponding durations of breastfeeding by working and non-working women were 11.9 and 12.3 in Jordan; and 17.0 and 16.5 months in Pakistan. In contrast, in Java the durations of breastfeeding were 20.4 and 16.4 months respectively. It is clear that working and non-working women do not, in fact, differ markedly in their breastfeeding practices in Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan. More importantly, a working Javanese woman breastfed her penultimate child for 4 months more than her non-working counterpart. Work and child rearing, thus, do not seem to be incompatible in these populations.

Working and non-working women once again do not substantially differ in the use of modern methods of contraception. Of exposed women in Bangladesh, 8 per cent of the non-working women were reported to be current users of modern methods of contraception as against 12.5 per cent of working women. The corresponding percentages of users among non-working and working women were 22.9 and 23.1 in Jordan; 6.7 and 6.3 in Pakistan, and 28.5 and 33.7 in Java. Once again, Java appears to be different. Working women in these populations, except Java, are not more likely to use modern methods of contraception than their non-working counterparts.

The near non-existence of any differential in fertility by work status of women in Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan is probably due to the fact that working women in these populations come mainly from the lower and lower middle socio-economic strata of the society who probably work to supplement the family budget, and in economic pursuits which do not conflict with child rearing. Moreover, as the percentage of users of contraception suggests, they are not even motivated to restrict their fertility.

In Java, on the other hand, working women not only breastfeed their children for longer periods but also are more likely to use modern methods of contraception than their non-working counterparts. They are more strongly motivated to control their fertility, which might explain the lower fertility observed among them. If working women in Java belong to a lower social class (Hull, 1975), and are engaged in economic activities that are largely not compatible with child rearing, and still have lower fertility, then the role incompatibility theory does not seem to apply here. It is possible that economic necessity which compels women to work may also compel them to restrict fertility.

Conclusion

The inverse relationship between work status of woman and fertility was supported by the data only from Java. The reason for the absence of the inverse relationship in the other three populations may be due to the fact that a small group of women work outside home in these populations; variation in the definition of work status, may be another possibility. It seems that employment opportunities are very limited for women in these populations, which

may largely be due to the socio-cultural attitude towards the employment of women.

If we take Java as an example, it may be suggested that facilitating access of women in greater numbers to material resources such as income producing occupations, and encouraging freedom of movement outside the home, that would permit exchange of ideas with other people in the community, would have a desirable fertility reducing effect in the other three Muslim populations. This would not only release women from their wider kinship unit, but would also extend to them the real possibility of exercizing greater direct control over their lives, encourage development of a greater degree of communication and equality between husband and wife in household decision making, and make women less dependent on husbands and children for economic security, all of which may be conducive to the extension of control over child bearing (Dixon, 1976).

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APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF CHILDREN EVER BORN BY WORK STATUS OF WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER MARRIAGE WITH DURATION OF MARRIAGE (DM), DURATION OF MARRIAGE SQUARE (DMSQ) AND AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE (AFM) TO MARRIED WOMEN STILL IN FIRST MARRIAGE AGED 15-49

Source of variation	*Bangladesh*			*Java*			*Jordan*			*Pakistan*		
	Sum of Squares	*df*	*F*	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*F*	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*F*	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*F*
Covariates												
DM	6211.6	1	1916.1***	4797.0	1	1385.7***	6017.0	1	1528.5***	6796.1	1	1698.1***
DMSQ	1485.8	1	458.4***	821.9	1	237.4***	1004.9	1	255.3***	1575.2	1	393.6***
AFM	390.2	1	120.4***	6.4	1	1.9	37.4	1	9.5**	5.7	1	1.4
Main Effect												
Work Status Before and After Marriage	6.7	2	1.0	489.3	3	47.1***	14.2	3	1.2	5.6	3	0.5
Explained	24981.5	5	1541.3***	23575.3	6	1135.1***	29627.9	6	1254.4***	27864.3	6	1160.4***
Residual	12769.0	3939		17557.6	5072		12364.8	3141		17725.9	4429	
Total	37750.5	3944		41132.9	5078		41992.7	3147		45590.3	4435	

Note. For work status categories see text.
***Sinnificant at $p < .001$
**Significant at $p < .01$