



FAMILY PLANNING BETWEEN THE SOMALI CULTURE AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the intricate connections between the Islamic faith, Somali culture, and family planning. Large families are viewed as a sign of social prestige and pride in Somali culture, which explores the societal norms and expectations surrounding family size. Examined are how maternal responsibilities and the extended family structure affect reproductive choices. The influence of Islamic teachings on family planning techniques in the Somali community is also investigated. Islam favors procreation and regards children as a heavenly blessing, but it also advocates responsible parenting and places a strong emphasis on the welfare of parents and children. The paper explores the ways in which Islamic scholars have interpreted sacred texts to advocate for the use of contraception within specific parameters. A sophisticated approach to family planning is produced by the fusion of Islamic tradition and Somali culture, balancing societal expectations with the welfare of the individual and the family. The abstract ends by emphasizing how crucial it is to comprehend these cultural and religious aspects in order to create successful tactics that respect the ideals and principles of the Somali community while advancing all-inclusive reproductive health care.

KEYWORDS: *Family planning, Somali culture, Islamic tradition, Societal norms Responsible parenthood.*

INTRODUCTION

Family planning is a complicated subject with many facets that touch on different cultural and religious beliefs. One such intersection is that which exists between Islamic tradition and Somali culture. Somalia, a country with a large Muslim population, has a rich cultural background that affects how it views family planning. Nevertheless, Islam has a big influence on how the Somali community views and behaves in terms of reproductive health.

The idea of family planning is frequently regarded in Somali culture through the prism of societal standards and expectations. The importance of the extended family structure cannot be overstated, and for people and their families, having children is a joy and a source of pride. According to a study by (Straus et al., 2009), Somali women see having big families as a sign of social prestige and motherhood as an integral component of their identity. In order to assure the continuance of the family line, there may be social pressure on couples to have more children, especially sons.

It is crucial to remember, though, that Islam also encourages responsible parenting and places a strong emphasis on the health of both parents and children. Islamic scholars have interpreted a number of verses from the Quran and Hadiths (prophet Muhammad's sayings) to justify the use of contraception when used within specified parameters. For example, a renowned Islamic Philosopher (Al-Qardawi, 2013) has said that contraception is acceptable as long as it does not endanger the woman's health or require permanent sterilization.

Overall, Islamic teachings and societal expectations both have an impact on family planning in the Somali culture. Islam provides a framework that enables ethical decision-making on reproductive health, notwithstanding the widespread desire for big families.



CONCEPT OF FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning is the voluntary, responsible choice made by individuals and couples regarding the desired number of children and when to have them. Therefore, on a micro level, it implies that children are born because their parents desire and can afford them and on a macro level, it means that it contributes to improving human life. In a similar way, family planning is conceived as follows: Every person has the right to choose how to spend their lives as best they can. A key component of this right is the decision of whether, when, how many, and with whom to have children. Family planning professionals have the honor and duty to assist people in making and carrying out their decisions. Programs that respect their clients' human rights also lead to better outcomes for sexual health (WHO/RHR, 2022).

Family planning is a vast subject that covers a number of reproductive health issues, such as contraception, knowledge of one's own fertility, and the spacing and timing of pregnancies. It is impacted by social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects. Family planning procedures and attitudes in Somali society are influenced by a blend of conventional principles, Islamic teachings, and modern trends.

FAMILY PLANNING AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

Islamic academics and religious authorities have engaged in extensive discussion and debate on the subject of family planning. Marriage, reproduction, and family life are only a few of the topics that are covered in detail in Islam as a holistic way of life. The Quran, the Hadith (sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad), and the consensus of Islamic scholars are the sources of Islamic ideas and teachings on family planning. We must take a closer look at the big picture in order to completely comprehend the Islamic perspective on family planning. Naturally, it starts with promoting the life principle. Thus, the Prophet's advice to procreate and the Qur'anic ban on infanticide, a common pre-Islamic practice involving born children that was primarily driven by economic and gender factors, were both given (Azizah, 1993).

The major source of Islamic doctrine, the Quran, does not specifically mention family planning. However, it places a strong emphasis on the value of good parenting and the welfare of kids. Muslims are urged by the Quran to fulfill their obligations to their families and to provide for their children's material, spiritual, and emotional needs. Additionally, it encourages moderation in all facets of life, including conception. Surah Al-Isra (17:31) is one scripture that is frequently brought up in conversations on family planning. It reads, "And do not kill your offspring for dread of poverty. We take care of both them and you. Indeed, it is a serious sin to murder them. Many academics understand this text as forbidding the purposeful termination of pregnancy only because of financial worries or fear of poverty. It emphasizes the value of life and the obligation to raise one's children.

Muslims who favor family planning frequently claim that the Qur'an is silent on the subject, and they interpret this silence as an affirmation rather than a condemnation. For example, Fazlur Rahman has noted that "one finds nothing which opposes the view that we should control our population, for a time, to remedy our present situation (Rahman 1972, 94)" in the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Conservative Muslims, however, like Abul eAl Maududi, maintain that "the Qur'an is not silent" (Maududi 1974, 83) regarding the matter. They cite the Qur'anic prohibition of the practice of burying live female infants, the "killing" of infants is forbidden or condemned in the Qur'anic verses (Surah 6: Al-Adam: 137, 140, 151; Surah 17: Al-isaii:31; Surah 60: Al-Mumtahanah:12), which were common in pre-Islamic Arabia (Surah 81: At-Takwir: 8-9; Surah 16: An-Nab!: 57-59). In addition, they cite the following verses to back up their claim that procreation is a gift from God (Hassan, 2000).

From the afore discussion, it is clear that when dealing with the family planning issue, Muslims are not in agreement in its permissibility or lack of it. The polarity of opinions on this topic among the Muslims paves the way for many to adopt a flexible approach mainly based on their own personal understanding and choice, while others follow people whom they think are in a better position when dealing with Islamic knowledge.

Additional information about family planning in an Islamic setting can be found in the Hadith, Contraception and birth control methods are not explicitly mentioned in the Prophet's sayings, however there are narrations that touch on related subjects. The story of Jabir ibn Abdullah asking the Prophet Muhammad (Saw) about the coitus interruptus (withdrawal method) as a method of contraception is one Hadith that is frequently cited. Although the Prophet did not expressly forbid or support this strategy, he did encourage Jabir to respect his wife's rights while simultaneously



pursuing his own ambitions. Although this narrative suggests that the withdrawal procedure was known and used throughout the time of the Prophet, it does not make a firm determination about its legality.

Another Hadith that is frequently quoted is one in which the Prophet Muhammad gave advice to a man to wed a child-bearer. Some academics interpret this story as an exhortation to reproduce and preserve the human race's continuance. It should be understood that this advice was given to a specific person and might not be appropriate in all situations.

Diverse viewpoints on family planning practices have been offered by Islamic thinkers. According to the majority of academics, family planning is acceptable as long as it doesn't result in permanent sterility or harm to the person's health. They contend that Islamic teachings support responsible parenthood and permit the use of contraceptives that are secure, reversible, and do not obstruct the normal reproductive cycle. Neither the topic of family planning is novel to Islamic societies nor is it a Western plot. Family planning is defined clearly in Islam, and it is also suggested how much of it is acceptable. Although there are many various ways to interpret these teachings, many Muslim nations have historically used them to guide their population strategies (El Hamri, 2010). From the above analysis, it is safe to seek knowledge from authentic and reliable sources and at the same time behave responsibly and fear Allah, keeping always in mind that we are all accountable to Allah for all our intentions, practices and deeds.

FAMILY PLANNING AND THE SOMALI CULTURE

Family planning is a subject that covers a number of reproductive health issues, such as contraception, knowledge of one's own fertility, and the spacing and timing of pregnancies. It is impacted by social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects. Family planning procedures and attitudes in Somali society are influenced by a blend of conventional principles, Islamic teachings, and modern trends.

The idea of family planning has existed for millennia in Somali society, even though it may not have been known by that name. In the past, Somali groups used a variety of techniques to regulate the size of their families and the spacing between births. Long-term nursing, abstention during specific times, and herbal cures were some of these techniques. Rather than population control, mother and child health was frequently the primary driver of these measures.

(Deyo, 2013) reported that, the practice of solely breastfeeding a child for two years is known as "child spacing," and it is done for the mother's health as well as the health of any future children she may have. Among the different methods used in family planning, child spacing, using long-term nursing is the preferred procedure regarding Somali culture. This is because both parents believe, this practice is good for the health of the mother and the child as mentioned earlier.

Islamic Teachings

Somalis' views on family planning are significantly influenced by Islamic teachings. Islam promotes responsible parenting and places a strong emphasis on taking good care of one's children. Although the use of contraception is not expressly forbidden in Islam, different scholars have different views on whether it is acceptable. According to certain Islamic scholars, contraception is acceptable as long as it doesn't endanger a woman's health or completely prevent her from having children. Others feel that contraception should only be used under legitimate medical circumstances or with both partners' permission. Religious Islamic leaders who were contacted stated that certain practice suggestions for the use of contraception are allowed in connection to birth spacing in order to promote the health of the mother and child. The term "birth spacing" is preferred over "family planning" when providing Muslim women with expert contraception guidance (Egeh et al., 2019). As explained elsewhere in the paper, the Somali culture gives priority to the health and well-being of the mother and her child over population control when considering family planning issues. Family planning strategies in Somali culture have been touched by contemporary influences as well. Social standards and values have changed as a result of urbanization, globalization, and more access to education. The attitudes about family planning have changed as more Somalis are exposed to contemporary ideas and concepts through media and encounters with other cultures.



The Intersection of Somali Culture and Islamic Tradition

It can be difficult to understand how Somali culture and Islamic family planning customs interact. While larger families may have been valued in traditional Somali culture, responsible parenting, and children's welfare are stressed in Islamic teachings.

Due to both cultural shifts and Islamic beliefs, there has been an increase in the acceptance of family planning within the Somali community in recent years. Numerous religious figures in Somalia have acknowledged the value of family planning in advancing the health and welfare of households. Couples have been urged to think carefully about how far apart to have their kids, keeping in mind things like the mother's health, their financial situation, and their capacity to care for each child properly. It is crucial to remember that some Somali populations still cling more strictly to traditional cultural traditions and can be less tolerant of contemporary family planning techniques.

(Gele et al., 2022) noted that more stringent and successful programs should be the current approach to assist minimize the risk of unsafe abortions in Somalia, where pervasive unfavorable attitudes regarding abortion, as mandated by the culture, obstruct access to safe abortions. Lack of education, poor access to healthcare, and deeply set cultural views are just a few of the things that can make people reluctant to use family planning methods.

THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT

The government of Somalia is aware of the value of family planning in advancing both sustainable development and mother and child health. There have been initiatives to broaden national access to reproductive healthcare services. The framework for managing the nation's supply chain for sexual and reproductive health has been enhanced (United Nations Development Programme Somalia, 2008). Nevertheless, problems such as a lack of resources, substandard infrastructure, cultural obstacles, and low awareness persist.

CONCLUSION

There are many facets and complexities to the discussion of family planning between Islamic religion and Somali culture. Large families are highly valued in Somali culture, which also sees kids as a blessing. Islamic teachings, however, also stress the value of good parenting and offer recommendations for family planning strategies. Islam provides for flexibility in family planning decisions as long as they are undertaken within the bounds established by Islamic teachings, notwithstanding potential conflicts between cultural standards and religious views.

It is essential to handle this subject with consideration for both cultural and religious viewpoints. Programs for education and awareness can be quite effective in bridging the gap between religious teachings and cultural customs and assisting people in making family planning decisions. Involving community elders and religious leaders in family planning meetings might also aid in resolving any misunderstandings or potential disputes.

Overall, when discussing family planning within the Somali community, striking a balance between cultural values and religious convictions is crucial. It is possible to assist people in making decisions that are consistent with their cultural heritage while still respecting their religious values by encouraging open communication, education, and understanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Understanding Somali Cultural Perspectives:

To effectively address family planning in the Somali community, it is crucial to comprehend the cultural perspectives and beliefs that shape attitudes towards reproductive health. This section should discuss the significance of extended families, the value placed on children, and the role of traditional gender roles in Somali culture. Emphasize the importance of approaching family planning discussions with cultural sensitivity and respect for these values.

➤ Exploring Islamic Teachings on Family Planning:

Islamic teachings offer guidance on various aspects of life, including family planning. In this section, provide an overview of the Islamic principles related to reproductive health, contraception, and responsible parenthood. Highlight the importance of consulting Islamic scholars and local religious leaders who can provide guidance on the compatibility of different family planning methods with Islamic teachings.

➤ Addressing Misconceptions and Myths:



Misconceptions and myths surrounding family planning often exist within cultural and religious contexts. This section should focus on debunking common misconceptions about contraception and family planning methods that may hinder their acceptance within the Somali community. Provide evidence-based information and cite reputable Islamic scholars to reinforce the compatibility of certain methods with Islamic principles.

➤ **Promoting Education and Awareness:**

Education and awareness campaigns play a vital role in promoting family planning practices. Discuss the importance of culturally sensitive educational initiatives that empower individuals, particularly women, with knowledge about reproductive health, contraception options, and responsible family planning. Highlight the significance of involving trusted community leaders, religious scholars, and healthcare providers in disseminating accurate information.

➤ **Encouraging Open Dialogue and Collaboration:**

Facilitating open and inclusive dialogue among community members, religious leaders, and healthcare providers is crucial for fostering a supportive environment for family planning. Encourage the establishment of community-based forums, workshops, and counseling services that provide a safe space for discussions, address concerns, and offer guidance on family planning matters. Collaborate with local religious institutions to integrate family planning education within religious teachings.

➤ **Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure:**

Efforts to promote family planning within the Somali community must be supported by accessible and culturally sensitive healthcare services. Advocate for the expansion of healthcare infrastructure, including reproductive health clinics, that offer a wide range of family planning options while respecting cultural preferences. Encourage healthcare providers to receive cultural competency training to better serve the Somali population.

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