



## Woman in Development and Politics

### Attitude Toward Maternal Identity and Fertility Intention: A Study among Women with at Least One Child in Urban Areas of Kashan City

Ahmad Dorahaki<sup>1</sup> | Masoumeh Akhavan Armaki<sup>2</sup>

1. Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor of Demography, Department of Demography, Faculty of Social Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [adorahaki@atu.ac.ir](mailto:adorahaki@atu.ac.ir)
2. Master of Demography, Department of Demography, Faculty of Social Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [m.akhavan.a@gmail.com](mailto:m.akhavan.a@gmail.com)

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 25 April 2023 Received in revised form: 20 August 2023 Accepted: 19 September 2023 Published online: 20 March 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> fertility, fertility intention, maternal identity, gender equality, Kashan.</p>	<p><b>Introduction</b> The total fertility rate of Iran from 2016 to 2019 indicates that the country's fertility has continued to decline during this period; as of 2019, this rate has risen to 1.7 children, and there is concern that it will continue to decline. A persistent decline in fertility rates below the replacement level will result in adverse annual population growth in subsequent years and give rise to significant demographic challenges, such as shifts in age structure indicators, a growing proportion of the population that is old, an increase in the median age of the population, and a reduction in the workforce. As a result of these concerns, low fertility has been identified as one of the most significant demographic challenges facing the country, and numerous policies have been suggested to address it. Numerous variables impact the decision to become pregnant, which is an intricate matter. The prevailing view among theorists is that fluctuations in fertility rates can be attributed to shifts in two overarching categories of societal factors: structural and cultural. Modernity and the expansion of global relations in the current era have brought about profound societal transformations across all dimensions—structural, cultural, social, etc. An element that can be considered is the notion of motherhood. Motherhood constitutes a significant facet of the female experience, as it entails the two vital responsibilities of childbirth and nurturing. The emergence of modernity has prompted a reevaluation and redefinition of the traditional expectations and roles associated with motherhood. An examination of the correlation between changes in women's fertility and modifications in attitudes toward maternal identity may provide valuable insights into the evolution of fertility patterns in Iran. Hence, the primary objective of the current research endeavour was to examine the correlation between the number of intended pregnancies and the attitude of married women aged 18-44 residing in the urban regions of Kashan city with regard to their maternal identity.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b> The present study employed a quantitative approach and adopted a descriptive-correlational design. Sampling was conducted among 33 health institutions located in urban areas of Kashan city using the multi-stage cluster method. A clustering analysis was conducted in 2020, and the total fertility rates of each base were categorized into three groups: health centers with total fertility rates below 1.5 (comprising 6 bases), health centers with total fertility rates between 1.5 and 1.79 (comprising 16 bases), and health centers with total fertility rates of 1.8 or higher (comprising 11 bases). The allocation of samples to individual clusters was determined in proportion to the statistical population size of that cluster in relation to the overall population of the statistical population. In the end, 385 qualified women were chosen for the study. Using Cronbach's alpha, the dependability of the conceptual variables of the study was further validated.</p> <p><b>Results</b> The research outcomes indicate that the mean intended fertility rate among the women included in the study is 2.2. The study participants' attitude toward maternal identity is evaluated at a higher level than the anticipated mean. This matter signifies the presence of a yearning and a positive sentiment regarding the maternal identity; in other words, it demonstrates the significance and precedence of the motherhood role in comparison to the other roles assumed by the women in the study. The findings of a bivariate analysis employing Pearson's correlation coefficient suggest that there is a positive correlation</p>

---

between the degree of emphasis placed on maternal identity and the quantity of intended offspring of women. However, the number of intended children of women decreases in direct proportion to their level of achievement of personal objectives and adherence to body management practices, which are indicators of gender equality. The findings from the multivariate analysis indicate that, when all other variables are held constant, the attitude toward maternal identity has a positive impact on women's intention to become parents, while the attitudes toward gender equality and education have a negative influence. Intent fertility decreases as the score for the attitude toward maternal identity (the significance and priority of the mother's role) decreases, while the score for the attitude toward gender equality increases. Additionally, university-educated women have lower fertility intentions. However, the results suggest that there is a statistically significant and causal relationship between education and gender equality variables and the attitudes of the women under study toward their maternal identity. Based on the findings of the research path analysis model, it can be concluded that there are two direct relationships between the number of children women aspire to have and their attitude toward maternal identity. Additionally, education and gender equality variables mediate the relationship between the two variables.

### Conclusion

The number of intended offspring of women is influenced by the attitude towards maternal identity in two direct ways, as well as through a mediator that accounts for the influence of education variables and gender equality. Based on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that a considerable proportion of women continue to regard motherhood as a priority and an essential aspect of their lives. Despite the fact that the notion of motherhood in the society under investigation has evolved in tandem with other research variables such as gender equality and educational attainment, further modifications are conceivable. Present-day mothers exhibit a discerning perspective regarding the conventional definition of motherhood and their own limitations in the realm of child care. Consequently, they prioritize the development of their personal interests and the augmentation of their competencies via education and employment. Certain demographic studies have placed emphasis on the reduction of the competing roles associated with childbearing. By adopting and actively participating in roles that are incompatible with parenthood to varying degrees and under different circumstances, women are hindered from having children or develop doubts about doing so. The utmost significance is attributed to absolute celibacy, as well as the education and employment of women beyond the household. In order to reconcile competing roles with the mother's role, such as women's employment and education, which are also consistent with the culture and values of Iranian society, it is crucial to reflect on such matters. Conversely, alongside conflicting roles that align with the values and culture of Iranian society, modern cultural manifestations such as consumerism are prioritized over the individualization of women's identities and the expansion of consumption as the primary determinant of their identities; this is in opposition to the traditional role of the mother. This necessitates focus and the establishment of value for the maternal role in their perception. Hence, in light of the aforementioned component changes, it is recommended that policymakers contemplate the augmentation of support programs and facilities that mitigate the conflict between the empowerment and independence of women with maternal identity components of the new demographic policies. By means of support and facilitation initiatives pertaining to maternal identity, Iranian society's genuine cultural foundation is esteemed in this regard.

---

**Cite this article:** Dorahaki, A., & Akhavan Armaki, M. (2024). Attitude Toward Maternal Identity and Fertility Intention: A Study among Women with at Least One Child in Urban Areas of Kashan City. *Women in Development and Politics*, 22(1), 245-691. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2023.358149.1008335>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2023.358149.1008335>

---