

Implications of Population Growth: Islamic and Social Perspectives

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Abstract

There are pertinent factors that are causing the multiplication of human beings and various implications of the immense growth. This study discussing population growth and its implications, points out the social responsibility and Islamic guidelines in this regard. It concludes that according to Islamic teachings, family size can be negotiated and planned by married couples. Many Islamic teachings are either not read properly, interpreted correctly or conveyed with true spirit. Educated religious scholars understand and elaborate the real issues associated with unchecked population growth. From social perspective, it is being observed that high level of illiteracy, lack of true religious knowledge and poverty are contributing to the many detrimental consequences such as high maternal and infant mortality rates, malnourishment of children, less or no investment in children's education etc.. On macro level, growing food insecurity, environmental degradation, unemployment, solid waste and poor hygienic conditions are among the few not to be ignored.

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Introduction

World population exceeded the limit of one billion for the first time in the early nineteenth century; it later on reached to seven billion after 2010 and expected to be around 9 billion by 2045.² Evolving demographic structure and changing proportion of youth and elderly people, rates of mortality, fertility and morbidity, population growth, urbanization, both internal and international migration are all associated. Persisting inequalities of opportunities and income within and across countries and regions are caused by massive growth in the population. Race, age, gender and ethnicity are underlying aspects of such inequalities.³

Water and land are limited and essential resources for human life; production of food depends on these resources that are mandatory for human survival. Societies can treat various related issues like food insecurity, malnutrition, better allocation and management of fresh water resources.⁴ Population growth rate has significant impact on country's economy. For instance, decline in fertility may cause shortage of labour in industrialized world and also put pressure on pension systems; whereas,

²Jan Van Bavel, "The world population explosion: causes, backgrounds and projections for the future." *Facts, views & vision in ObGyn* 5, no. 4 (2013): 281.

³ UNFPA UNDESA, "Population Dynamics: Thematic Think Piece." In *2010 High level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals 2012*.

⁴ Uwe A Schneider., Petr Havlík, Erwin Schmid, Hugo Valin, Aline Mosnier, Michael Obersteiner, Hannes Böttcher et al. "Impacts of population growth, economic development, and technical change on global food production and consumption." *Agricultural Systems* 104, no. 2 (2011): 204-215.

in developing countries high fertility rate is considered as an impediment to social and economic progress.⁵

There is very strong association between child mortality and fertility rate. Husband, wife and families can never be convinced about birth control benefits if they do not have faith in survival chances of the children. In this regard, good health care facilities are mandatory as it is one of the reasons for persistently high fertility rate. Education is an important factor that could lead to decline in fertility, perhaps the most significant one.⁶ It increases the level of motivation for family planning as parents tend to invest more in their children. As Malthus perceived rapid population growth causes poverty and famine; though it was criticized but one may assume that poverty and relevant social circumstances such as illiteracy, lack of care facilities and education lead to unhealthy expansion of population. Association between education and birth control has been found in many studies.⁷ Primary education does matter, however larger impact could be assessed with the benefits of secondary education; it can be seen as change in lifestyle, motivation to have fewer children, better understanding of how money, time and other resources can be properly invested by the educated parents. Therefore, for population experts it is

⁵ Fumitaka Furuoka and Qaiser Munir, "Is population growth beneficial or detrimental to economic development? a new evidence from Pakistan." *Journal of Population and Social Studies [JPSS]* 18, no. 2 (2010): 25-38.

⁶ Cohen, Joel E. "Make secondary education universal." *Nature* 456, no. 7222 (2008): 572- 573.

⁷ James, K. S., Vegard Skirbekk and Jan Van Bavel, "Education and the global fertility transition-Foreword." *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research* 10 (2012): 1-8.

considered a humanitarian goal as it secures lives by enhancing the survival chances of both mother and child.⁸

Literacy rate is a mandatory parameter for sustainable development as well.⁹ Moreover, women with higher education are likely to take better care of their health and can well understand the significance of small families. Resultantly, there would be low fertility and better living standards; also more investment in education of children.¹⁰ Positive correlation between economic expansion and education has also been established.¹¹ Education is not only about imparting skills and knowledge to enable the beneficiaries who can then act as agents of social change and economies but also to introduce ideas, values, ideologies, rationales, attitudes important to overall process of development.¹² Population

⁸ Jan, "The world population explosion: causes, backgrounds and projections for the future." *Facts, views & vision in ObGyn* 5, no. 4 (2013): 281.

⁹ Muhammad Akram and Faheem Jehangir Khan, *Public provision of education and government spending in Pakistan*. No. 2007: 40. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 2007.

¹⁰ Zeba Sathar, Nigel Crook, Christine Callum and Shahnaz Kazi. "Women's status and fertility change in Pakistan." *The Population and Development Review* (1988): 415-432.

¹¹ Tehmina.Sattar, "A Sociological Analysis of Education as a Prerequisite for the Process of Development: A Case of Southern Punjab (Pakistan)." *International Journal of learning and development* 2, no. 2 (2012): 112-132.

¹² Ronald E. Anderson and Sara Dexter, "School technology leadership: An empirical investigation of prevalence and effect." *Educational administration quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2005): 49-82.

growth, economic situation, urbanization, increasing use of energy, transportation and intensification of agriculture are among the pertinent factors leading to environmental degradation. Poverty alleviation cannot be addressed without considering the aforementioned factors and developing a mechanism of equitable distribution of resources.¹³ There is dynamic interplay of social, economic, technological and institutional activities/ functioning; deterioration of environment might be caused social factors including population growth, urbanization, poverty and other economic factors such as functioning of markets, disparity between public and private sector, impact of agricultural sector on environment; policy makers need to consider all these factors to formulate a consolidated policy for population management.

Islamic doctrine can be used as a device through which a form of bio power employed to control reproduction.¹⁴ It is to bridge the ideological divide and to encourage the use of contraceptive or any other family planning technique as religiously permissible act. Fertility regulation practices along with behavioral changes both at macro (population) and micro (individual) levels might be used as an apparatus of biopower.¹⁵ This could be accomplished through conveying religious criteria and conditional requirements that need to be focused for reduction in fertility

¹³Himayatullah Khan, Ehsan Inamullah and Khadija Shams, "Population, environment and poverty in Pakistan: linkages and empirical evidence." *Environment, development and sustainability* 11, no. 2 (2009): 375-392.

¹⁴Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley." *New York: Pantheon* (1978).

¹⁵ Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, "Biopower today." *BioSocieties* 1, no. 2 (2006): 195.

rate. Islamized family planning thus becomes a product of biopolitical "strategies and contestations over problematizations of collective human vitality and over the forms of knowledge, regimes of authority and practices of interventions that are desirable, legitimate and efficacious. Synergistic viewpoint of Islam, its preachers ('*Ūlamās*) and proponents of family planning is need of the hour. Religiously conservative families and traditional rationalizations regarding family planning or reproduction are matter of concern. Economic rationalities are usually emphasized while mentioning smaller family size as preferred choice. Various considerations including finances for children education, medical costs, availability of relatives, individual and collective beliefs, conservative and moderate subscriptions associated with the interpretation of Islam. Literate people and religious scholar having educated background have better understanding of family planning and how it should be communicated to the masses as the situation in Islamic countries is not pleasant rather worrisome.

Among all these Muslim countries, situation is observed to be worst in Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are various indigenous factors behind the bigger family size in Pakistan with high illiteracy rate. Preference of son often leads to greater number of children till the birth of male child. Traditional mindset is the main causal factor behind the large families, particularly those living in poverty. Misconceptions and myths about lack of proper knowledge are among the reasons that majority of masses have negative opinion regarding small family size and adopting family planning techniques.¹⁶ Having more children, particularly sons is

¹⁶Mishal S Khan, Farah Naz Hashmani, Owais Ahmed, Minaal Khan, Sajjad Ahmed, Shershah Syed and Fahad Qazi, "Quantitatively evaluating the effect of social barriers: a

likely to enhance the status and prestige of the family.¹⁷ Many religious beliefs, for instance fertility is determined by God and human cannot or should not interfere in Almighty's decision are the commonly prevalent ones.¹⁸ Lack of support and approval by the family members (specifically women) are other obstacles in limiting their family size by using family planning methods.¹⁹ In this connection, women often lack decision making power regarding their reproductive behavior. Lack of communication between the couple is another factor associated with family planning.²⁰ Uptake of modern contraceptives is usually practiced in the areas where there are no health care facilities in the form of clinic etc. offering family planning services.²¹ If there are some health centers available, these are mostly underutilized due to social factors, inaccessibility and lack of proper management. Shyness and cultural taboos associated with reproductive

case-control study of family members' opposition and women's intention to use contraception in Pakistan." *Emerging themes in epidemiology* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1-5.

¹⁷Peter Huisman and Kimberley Wallaart, "Pakistan Impact Report: The World Citizens Panel." (2016).

¹⁸M. Iqbal, Zafar, M. Habib Ullah and Saif Abbasi, "Fertility Regulating Behaviour: A Study of Rural Punjab-Pakistan." *JApSc* 3, no. 6 (2003): 376-384.

¹⁹ Sohail Agha, "Intentions to use contraceptives in Pakistan: implications for behavior change campaigns." *BMC public health* 10, no. 1 (2010): 450.

²⁰M. Framurz K Kiani, "Motivation and involvement of men in family planning in Pakistan." *The Pakistan Development Review* (2003): 197-217.

²¹ Sultan, Mehboob, John G. Cleland, and Mohamed M. Ali. "Assessment of a new approach to family planning services in rural Pakistan." *American journal of public health* 92, no. 7 (2002): 1168-1172.

health and sexuality are other barriers which make it extremely difficult to discuss family planning issues. Men's participation and involvement in family planning has been an important part of reproductive health programmes which is often missing in the region.

In Pakistani society, men are the breadwinners and therefore considered responsible for provision of food and other basic needs. Distinct responsibilities of both the partners influence the control over the reproductive decision making.²² Influence of men's dominance prevails due to various socio-cultural factors such as older age of man compared to his wife then she is financially dependent on her spouse for basic necessities like provision of food and shelter.²³ That are reasons why mostly women rely on men for decisions related with reproductive health and family size.²⁴ Distinct gender roles and responsibilities impacts control over reproductive decision making. In Pakistan, westernization has influenced the attitudes of people towards family planning and some people have started to practice outside their family norms though social pressure remains about initiating a family and having certain number of

²²M. Framurz K. Kiani, "Motivation and involvement of men in family planning in Pakistan." *The Pakistan Development Review* (2003): 197-217.

²³Mihira V. Karra, Nancy N. Stark and Joyce Wolf, "Male involvement in family planning: A case study spanning five generations of a South Indian family." *Studies in family planning* (1997): 24-34.

²⁴Zeba A Sathar and Shahnaz Kazi, "Women's autonomy, livelihood and fertility: a study of rural Punjab." *Women's autonomy, livelihood and fertility: a study of rural Punjab*. (1997). Hasna, Fadia. "Islam, social traditions and family planning." *Social Policy & Administration* 37, no. 2 (2003): 181-197.

children.²⁵ Besides cultural beliefs, socio-economic status of the couple, literacy level and occupational status are observed to be the determining factors of family size.²⁶

The reason why it should be a matter of concern as a large majority of people are poor and illiterate, population is young demographically. Many international programmes have been challenged due to lack of relevance with the indigenous structure. Therefore, it is extremely important to understand the socio-cultural context and make policies that are in line with the faith of people in a given region. Social norms and values have been emphasized once demographers realized that cognitive changes are primary driving force leading to decline in child birth rate.²⁷ Economic factor was relatively less significant or become the secondary factor and because the shift in change of thinking patterns can only make people realize that it is going to be beneficial in various ways. Issues associated with increase in population, utilization and depletion of resources and environmental deterioration must be considered jointly in order to resolve it.²⁸

²⁵ Zeba A Sathar and John B. Casterline, "The onset of fertility transition in Pakistan." *Population and development review* (1998): 773-796.

²⁶ Kiani, M. Framurz K. "Motivation and involvement of men in family planning in Pakistan." , 197-217.

²⁷ Underwood, Carol. "Islamic precepts and family planning: The perceptions of Jordanian religious leaders and their constituents." *International Family Planning Perspectives* (2000): 110-136.

²⁸Paul R. Ehrlich and John P. Holdren, "Impact of population growth." *Science* 171, no. 3977 (1971): 1212-1217.

Family planning is one fundamental aspect of reproductive health, it is also a key to maternal health and increase the chances of infant survival.²⁹ Rapid population growth in Pakistan has been taking toll on economic and social resources over the past few decades. The current situation warrants the urgent need to improve the efforts regarding population planning; further to reduce pressures on the country's capital and physical resources.³⁰ Some of the recent initiatives including family welfare centres, reproductive health care centre, mobile service units and traditional birth attendants are playing their part in bringing about positive change. Family planning and decrease in fertility would not only save women's and children's lives but also have implications for economic development. Moreover, increase challenges with reference to education, climate change, urbanization, depletion of natural resources etc. are related to growing pressure of increasing number of people on earth. Therefore, this also becomes a top priority among the other sustainable development goals.³¹ In Pakistan, this have been found that there are growing number of infants born due to high fertility rate, are not even

²⁹ Mahmoud Yaghoubi doust et al, Examine the Relationships between Socio - Cultural factors with the tendency of Men to participate in Family Planning. *Int Jr. of clinical & case.* 1:6, 127-130. DOI:10.25141/2472-102X-2017-6.0129.

³⁰Naushin Mahmood and Syed Mubashir Ali, "Population planning in Pakistan: issues in implementation and its impact." *The Pakistan Development Review* (1997): 875-888.

³¹Sara Harris and Jay Gribble, 17 Reasons to Invest in Family Planning in Pakistan: Accelerating Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Washington, DC: Palladium, Health Policy Plus. (2018).

provided with the basic nutritional requirement, therefore it a matter of concern to educate the masses along with the religious clerics. Majority of poor people do not have direct access to formal education and for them religious teachings (as told) are the primary source of information.

Following strategies are prescribed to overcome obstacles and adoption of family planning techniques: ³²

Spreading knowledge about the health risks of incessant pregnancies and awareness about contraceptive methods so that negative attitude towards family planning can be changed. Intra-marital communication has to be improved with increase of physical and social accessibility of contraception. Contacting husband and mothers directly besides women to raise awareness. Engaging both partners in the process of educating them about family planning and positives of smaller family size. Involving religious authorities having positive stance or opinion regarding family planning which is used to be considered a sinful and culturally unacceptable acts. Guiding young women to overcome their shyness so they can discuss it with their husbands, also teaching these women the ways or convincing strategies such as informing about life risks for them and the unborn child. Encouraging men to actively participate in discussion family planning and involve their women in decision making including planning their families. Easy and cheap availability of contraceptives in pharmacies and various procedures available at government hospitals and family planning centres to increase intervals between children can be very effective measures. Encouraging

³²Geoffrey McNicoll, "Consequences of rapid population growth: An overview and assessment." *Population and development review* (1984): 177-240.

counselling and door to door services to overcome mobility of Pakistani women. In the following section Islamic guidelines have been discussed to develop the holistic view of the issue and how it can be managed.

Population and Family Planning in Islam

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) started preaching Islam at Makkah according to the commandment of Allah. In Makkan period, the pace of conversion was not very fast. The people of his house like Khadijah and her daughters, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Zayd Ibn Harthah (God be pleased with them) embraced Islam. Besides them, some important and influential personalities of Makkah like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, Hamzah (God be pleased with them) accepted the invitation to come under the fold of Islam. However, the number of believers was not too large prior to the migration to Yathrib latterly called Madinah al-Nabī. According to Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, it was just after the migration that the Muslim were enrolled following the commandment of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting).³³ Dr. Subḥī Sālih writes that the Holy Prophet ordered his companions to conduct census in the first year of migration.³⁴ It can be concluded that the first census of Ummah was conducted immediately after the settlement of emigrants. This Prophetic commandment was to assess the number of the Believers available for defense of nascent city-state. Imām Bukhārī has narrated on the authority of Hudhaifah :

³³ Muhammad Hamidullah, Dr., Ahd-i Nabawi mein Nizam-i- Ḥukmarani, (Karachi, Sind: Urdu Acadamy), 201.

³⁴ Dr. Şubḥī Şāleḥ Dr.'Ulum al-Ḥadīth, trans. Ghulam Ahmad Hariri (Faisalabad: Malik Sons Publishers,2009), 43.

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ : اَكْتُبُوا لِي مَنْ تَلَفَّظَ بِالْإِسْلَامِ مِنَ النَّاسِ " . فَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ أَلْفًا وَخَمْسِمِائَةً رَجُلًا، فَقُلْنَا نَخَافُ وَنَحْنُ أَلْفٌ وَخَمْسِمِائَةٌ فَلَقَدْ رَأَيْنَا ابْنَيْنَا حَتَّى إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لِيُصَلِّيَ وَحْدَهُ وَهُوَ خَائِفٌ

“The Prophet said: Enroll the names of those people who have announced that they are Muslims.’ So, we listed one thousand and five hundred men. Then we wondered, ‘Should we be afraid (of infidels) although we are one thousand and five hundred in number?’ No doubt, we witnessed ourselves being afflicted with such bad trials that one would have to offer the prayer alone in fear.”³⁵.

In this Prophetic tradition, the number of those believing in Islam is told as 1500, but the number varies in other traditions. ³⁶ Imam Nawawī, a commentator of *Sahīḥ Muslim*, has established compatibility in this way that the total number of Muslims both men and women, was 1500 persons. Among them 600 to 700 were males, out of which 500 were warriors.³⁷ The higher figure reported may be accepted as all believers comprising men, women and children and the middle figure tallies males and the lower number indicates men specifically who were able to fight in the battlefield.

³⁵ Muhammad Ibn Ismāīl al-Bukhārī, *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book on Fighting for the Cause of Allah Chapter 181: The listing of the people by the Imam, Hadith: 3060.

³⁶ See for example: Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, Book on Tribulations, Chapter 23: Patience at the time of calamity, Hadith 4029.

³⁷ Abu Zakariyya Yahya bin Sharf Nawawī, *Al-Minhāj fī Sharḥ Ṣahīḥ Muslim Ibn al-Hajjāj*, Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Muslim (Riyad: Baīt al- Afkār al Dauliyah, nd), 186-7.

Not to Leave Heirs in Adversity

The following Ḥadīth is shedding light that parents should not leave their children in adversity who are forced to beg for their survival. Ibn Mājah has narrated from 'Amir Ibn Sa'd that his father said:

مَرَضْتُ عَامَ الْفَتْحِ حَتَّى أَشْفَيْتُ عَلَى الْمَوْتِ فَعَادَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقُلْتُ أَيُّ رَسُولٍ
 اللَّهُ إِنَّ لِي مَالًا كَثِيرًا وَلَيْسَ يَرِثُنِي إِلَّا ابْنَتِي أَفَأَتَصَدَّقُ بِثُلُثِي مَا لِي قَالَ " لَا " . قُلْتُ
 فَالْشَّطْرُ قَالَ " لَا " . قُلْتُ فَالْثُلُثُ قَالَ " الْثُلُثُ وَالْثُلُثُ كَثِيرٌ إِنَّكَ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ وَرَثَتَكَ
 أَغْنِيَاءَ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ تَتْرَكَهُمْ عَالَةً يَتَكَفَّفُونَ النَّاسَ " .³⁸

I became sick during the year of the Conquest, and was at death's door. The Messenger of Allah came to visit me and I said: 'O Messenger of Allah I have a great deal of wealth and no one will inherit from me apart from my daughter. Can I give two thirds of my wealth in charity?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'Then half?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'One third?' He said: 'One third and one third is a lot. If you leave your heirs rich that is better than leaving them destitute and begging from people.'

According to Imām Ghazālī the Prophet is reported to have said: "After two hundred years, a man who will have no wife and children will be better. A time will come over the man when he will be destroyed by his wife, parents and children. They will give him such trouble which will be out of his capacity. As a result, he will adopt such measures for which his religion will be ruined and he will be destroyed."³⁹ According to Imam

³⁸ Ibn Mājah Sunan, The Chapters on Wills, Ḥadīth: 2708. Also See: Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Merits of the Helpers in Madinah (Kitab al-Ansaar), Chapter 49: "O Allah! Complete the emigration of my Companions", Ḥadīth: 393.

³⁹ Ghazali, Ihya <http://ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol2-C2.htm>

Ghazālī the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said: "One of the two reasons of want lessness is a smaller number of family members. One of the two reasons of poverty is having too many persons."⁴⁰

It is better to have number of children according to the resources. Family Planning is not a sin at all. A prayer has been reported from the Holy Prophet on the authority of Abū Hurairah that:

تَعَوَّذُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنْ جَهْدِ الْبَلَاءِ، وَدَرْكِ الشَّقَاءِ، وَسُوءِ الْقَضَاءِ، وَشَمَاتَةِ الْأَعْدَاءِ.⁴¹

Take refuge with Allah from the difficulties of severe calamities (Jahd al-balā'), from having an evil end and a bad fate and from the malicious joy of your enemies.

Breast Feeding and Birth Control

Breast feeding is a practice to avoid pregnancy. Suckling mothers have lesser chances of conceiving. During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting), it was believed that cohabitation with wife during lactation is dangerous for suckling kids. This was against the practice of people belonging to Persia and Rome. The Holy Prophet negated such belief:

ذَكَرَ الْعَزَلُ عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ " وَمَا ذَاكُمْ " . قَالُوا الرَّجُلُ تَكُونُ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ تُرَضِعُ

فَيُصِيبُ مِنْهَا وَيَكْرَهُ أَنْ تَحْمِلَ مِنْهُ وَالرَّجُلُ تَكُونُ لَهُ الْأُمَةُ فَيُصِيبُ مِنْهَا وَيَكْرَهُ أَنْ

⁴⁰ Ghazali, Ihya <http://ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol2-C2.htm>

⁴¹ Also See: Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Divine Will (Kitāb al-Qadar), Chapter13 Refuge with Allah from having an evil end of the worldly life and having a bad fate, Hadith:6616. The similar is narrated on the others authorities, See for example: Ahmad Ibn Mūsa Ibn Mardawayh, Juz fīhi mā intiqā Ibn Mardawiyah 'alā al-Tabrānī (Riyādh: Adwa al-Salaf, 1420/200), 358. Ḥadīth: 173.

تَحْمِلَ مِنْهُ . قَالَ " فَلَا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ لَا تَفْعَلُوا ذَاكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا هُوَ الْقَدَرُ " . قَالَ ابْنُ عَوْنٍ
فَحَدَّثْتُ بِهِ الْحَسَنَ فَقَالَ وَاللَّهِ لَكَأَنَّ هَذَا رَجْرٌ .⁴²

‘Azl was mentioned in the presence of Allah’s Apostle whereupon he said: Why do you practice it? They said: There is a man whose wife has to suckle the child, and if that person has a cohabitation with her (she may conceive) which he does not like, and there is another person who has a slave-girl and he has a sexual intercourse with her, but he does not like her to have conception so that she may not become Umm Walad, whereupon he the Prophet said: There is no harm if you do not do that, for that (the birth of the child) is something pre-ordained. Ibn ‘Aūn said: I made a mention of this Ḥadīth to Ḥasan, and he said: By Allah, (it seems) as if there is upbraiding in it (for ‘azl).

Imām Muslim has related in his Ṣaḥīḥ: “Judāmah daughter of Wahb, sister of Ukkāshah reported: “I went to Allah's Messenger (upon whom be peace and greeting) along with some persons and he was saying: I intended to prohibit cohabitation with the suckling women, but I considered the Greeks and Persians, and saw that they suckle their children and this thing (cohabitation) does not do any harm to them (to the suckling women). Then they asked him about ‘azl, whereupon he said. That is the secret (way of) burying alive, and Ubaidullah has made this addition in the hadith transmitted by al-Muqrī and that is:" When the one buried alive

⁴² Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, The Book of Marriage, Chapter 22: The ruling on coitus interrupts (‘Azl), Ḥadīth: 1438 g.

is asked."⁴³ In Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Judāmah daughter of Wahb reported that she heard Allah's Messenger saying: "I intended to prohibit cohabitation with a suckling woman until I considered that the Romans and the Persians do it without any injury being caused to their children thereby."⁴⁴ According to Tirmidhī, Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqas reported that a person came to Allah's Messenger and said: "I do 'azl with my wife. Thereupon Allah's Messenger said: Why do you do that? The person said: I fear harm to her child or her children. Thereupon Allah's Messenger said: If that were harmful it would harm the Persians and the Greeks."⁴⁵ In Sunan Abī Dāwūd it is quoted: "Abu Sa'īd reported "The people mentioned about coitus interruptus before the Prophet. He said "Why one of you does so? He did not say "One of you should not do so". Every soul that is to be born; Allah will create it."⁴⁶ A man asked the Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace and greeting) about coitus interruptus and said: "My wife is breast-feeding and I do not want her to get pregnant."

⁴³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, The Book of Marriage, Chapter 24: It is permissible to have intercourse with a breastfeeding woman (Ghilah), and 'Azl is disliked), Ḥadīth: 1442b.

⁴⁴Abī Dāwūd Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Nikāh (The Book of Marriage), Chapter715: Regarding 'Azl (Withdrawing Before Ejaculation), Ḥadīth:2170.

⁴⁵Al-Tirmidhī Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī, The Book on Marriage, Chapter39: What Has Been Related About 'Azl, Ḥadīth: 1136.

⁴⁶ Abī Dāwūd Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Nikāh (The Book of Marriage), Chapter715: Regarding 'Azl (Withdrawing Before Ejaculation), Ḥadīth:2171.

The Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said: "What has been decreed in the womb will come to be."⁴⁷

So, from the above-mentioned traditions it is evident that matrimonial relation during breast feeding is not prohibited. If breast feeding is continued, it becomes a natural contraceptive measure. Deducing from the above discussion, one can infer that Islam does not prohibit family planning rather suggest appropriate ways that would ultimately lead to healthy population, it will further reduce many social and economic issues.

Conclusion

The above discussion directs the attention towards the negligence of people regarding family planning; it also highlights lack of education to comprehend its significance. It is suggested that both religious education and awareness (campaigning etc.) should be emphasized to change the conservative mindsets of the people and enlighten them with true Islamic teachings. We know that humans have limited natural resources including land and water etc. However, what is less known to majority is that there is an excessive pressure on these resources due to high population growth in any given region. Food insecurity, unemployment, healthy living conditions, poor quality of air, congested residential spaces are the outcomes and further aggravating the situation

⁴⁷ Al-Nasā'ī, Sunan al-Nasā'ī, The Book of Marriage, Chapter 54:al-Ghilah, Hadith: 3328.