

## Exploring Strategies to Resolve Contradictions between Verses and Narrations Regarding Procreation and Limiting Progeny

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### Abstract

Given the importance of increasing and decreasing procreation, the present study aims to address contradictory verses and narrations on this topic using a descriptive and analytical method and answer the question: 'What are the solutions for resolving contradictory verses and narrations regarding the increase and decrease of procreation?' The research findings show that by applying two solutions, namely governmental decrees and the rules of conflict, balance, and preference, the conflict among the verses and narrations in the field of prolificacy and population control is resolved. In the first approach, the verses and narrations of prolificacy and population control, based on the primary principle and rule, indicate the preference and desirability of increasing procreation. However, if the individual and social conditions of the Islamic community change, the primary rule may change. The ruler and the supreme jurisprudent can issue a decree according to the circumstances of the time. Consequently, both an increase and a decrease in procreation may occur in different times and conditions in the Islamic community, thus avoiding a conflict. In the second approach, considering that the contradictory verses and narrations in the field of prolificacy and population control are divided into three categories: Conflict between verses of prolificacy and verses of population control, conflict between verses and narrations of prolificacy and population control, and conflict between narrations of prolificacy and narrations of population control. In the conflict between verses of prolificacy and verses of population control, the verses of prolificacy are preferred. In the conflict between verses and narrations of prolificacy and population control, two scenarios are possible: Sometimes the verses of prolificacy conflict with the narrations of population control, in which case the verses of prolificacy are preferred because they are definite in meaning (*Dalālah*) and definite in origin (*Sudūr*), while the narrations of population control are speculative in meaning (*Dalālah*) and speculative in origin (*Sudūr*); and sometimes, the verses of population control conflict with the narrations of prolificacy. The narrations of prolificacy are

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preferred because the verses of population control do not indicate procreation and increasing progeny. In the conflict between narrations of prolificacy and narrations of population control, since the conflict between these narrations is of the type of absolute and restricted conflict, the narrations of population control are restricted by the narrations of prolificacy. Accordingly, according to the verses and narrations, the abundance and increase of procreation are desirable.

**Keywords:** Population Increase, Procreation, Population Control, Quran, Narrations

## Introduction

Children and procreation are among the topics that have been given special attention and importance in the Holy Quran and the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). In the Holy Quran and narrations, children are referred to with terms such as: "The light of the eye," (al-Furqān: 76) a gift and a blessing from God Almighty (Āli 'Imrān: 14, al-Nahl: 7), a possession of this world (Āli 'Imrān: 14), the adornment of life (al-Kahf: 46), and a helper to parents (al-Isrā': 6). Having righteous children is also mentioned as the wish of God's prophets (Āli 'Imrān: 38), the delight of the eyes of God's special servants (al-Furqān: 74), and a cause for divine glad tidings (Hūd: 71 and al-Hijr: 51-53). Furthermore, the increase of progeny and the survival of humanity are stated as one of the goals of forming a family (al-Shūrā: 11). In the narrations and sayings of the impeccable Imams (AS), it also holds a special value.

The Messenger of God (PBUH) in a narration describes a child as a fragrant flower (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 5, 39). And procreation is so important that even a miscarried child brings happiness to the parents (Ṣadūq, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 3, 384). So, according to the Quran and narrations, procreation itself is desirable; but by examining the verses and narrations on procreation, we encounter two sets of contradictory verses and narrations: "Some verses and narrations indicate the prolificacy and abundance of procreation, while others indicate population control and a decrease in procreation."

Therefore, the present study aims to answer the following fundamental question: 'What are the strategies for resolving the conflicts between verses and narrations regarding increasing and limiting childbearing?'

### 1. Research Background

Regarding the research background, it must be said that many works have been written on prolificacy and population control, including:

- The book *Risālah Nikāhīyyah* (Population Decrease, a Severe Blow to the Body of Muslims) by Husseini Tehrani published in 2016 AD/1395 SH by *Allamah Tabātabā'ī* Publications.
- The book "Islam and Family Planning" by Sayyid Mohammad Ali Ayazi, published in 1994 AD/1373 SH by Islamic Culture Publications. This book addresses population control and responds to its ambiguities.
- The following academic articles:
  - "Population Control" by Hussein Nouri Hamedani in *Fiqh Ahl al-Bayt Journal* in 2003 AD/1382 SH.
  - "A Reflection on Population Control Policy" by Mohammad Fuladvand in *Social and Cultural Knowledge Journal* in 2011 AD/1390 SH.
  - "A Jurisprudential Study on Prolificacy and Its Relation to Family Consolidation" by Naser Ashouri and Mansour Gharibpour in *Islamic Research Paper of Womwn and Family Journal* in 2023 AD/1402 SH.
  - "Analysis of Factors Increasing and Decreasing Population Based on the Teachings of the Quran and Hadith" by Mohammad Reza Aram and Sayyid Mojtaba Azizi in *Woman Scientific and Cultural Educational Quarterly* in the summer of 2023 AD/1402 SH.

- "Review and Critique of the Views of Opponents of Population Increase Based on Verses and Narrations Indicating Population Control" by Fatemeh Babazeidi, Sayyid Mojtaba Mirdamadi, and Rasoul Mohammad Ja'fari in the *Women and Family Scientific and Cultural Educational Journal* in the summer of 2024 AD/1403 SH.
- "Explanation and Examination of the Views Inferred from the Verses and Narrations on Strategic Policies of Prolificacy and Population Increase in Islam" by Zahra Sadat Mirhashemi and Tahereh Jalili Kalhori in the *Women and Family Studies Journal* in the fall and winter of 2017 AD/1396 SH.
- "A Rereading of *Nahj al-Balāgha*'s Wisdom 141 in Connection with the Religious Necessity of Prolificacy" by Mohsen Rafat, Zohreh Kashani, and Zahra Dolati in *Islamic Research Paper of Women and Family Journal* in the summer of 2024 AD/1403 SH.
- "The Impact of Shi'a Teachings and Fatwas on Population Growth and Control" by Mohammad Vali Ali'i in *Shi'a Studies Journal* in the winter of 2024 AD/1402 SH.
- "Re-examination of Jurisprudential Approaches in Population Control and Family Planning" by Forouzan Ala'i and Susan Al Rasoul in the *Jurisprudence and Islamic Law Scientific Journal* in the winter of 2015 AD/1393 SH.
- "Factors of Elevation in Family Consolidation in the Views of Contemporary Commentators and Thinkers" by Amirhossein Bankipour and Fahimeh Bankipour and Fahimeh Mo'meni Rad in the *Women and Family Cultural and Educational Quarterly* in the winter of 2017 AD/1396 SH.

However, it seems that although many works have been written about prolificacy and population increase and population control and decrease, no independent and significant work has been written that comprehensively and completely addresses this issue. Therefore, the present study seeks to comprehensively examine the solutions for resolving contradictory verses on family planning and reproduction with a descriptive and analytical approach. In this regard, the solutions presented in this article highlight the newness of the work and research.

## 2. Research Method

This research was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach, specifically through conceptual and document analysis. Using this method and a library-based approach, verses from the Holy Quran and narrations from the impeccable Imams (AS) related to increasing and limiting progeny were extracted. Then, in accordance with the research question, the conflicting verses and narrations on the topic of procreation and limiting progeny, along with their sources, were analyzed.

## 3. Conceptualization

### 3.1. Procreation

This word, whose Arabic equivalent is "*Tawālud*," mostly includes "The birth of a child" and "Absolute procreation," which is the closest literal Arabic word to "Procreation." However, "Procreation" in this research refers to the set of actions that in a process lead to procreation. Therefore, if such a concept is extracted from the word "*Tawālud*," it will be a concrete equivalent of "Procreation." (cf. Muṣṭafawī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 3, 38)

### **3.2. Procreation and Limiting Progeny**

"Procreation" is derived from the root "*Kathura*" and in dictionaries, it indicates the opposite of "*Qalīl*" (few) (Ibn Durayd, 1990: 1, 422). It is said that "*Kathrah*" (abundance) and "*Qillah*" (fewness) are used for quantities that are separate and distinct from each other, like numbers (Rāghib Isfahānī, n.d.: 703). Therefore, this term refers to the quantitative increase of children, which is followed by an increase in population growth in societies. The purpose of "Population Control" is the reduction of human beings through the birth of children, which is followed by a decrease and aging of the population.

### **3.3. Conflict, Balance, and Preference**

Conflict occurs when there is an inherent or accidental difference between two or more pieces of evidence. This type of conflict has two parts:

- Apparent or non-established conflict is where the conflict between apparent pieces of evidence is resolved by a common reconciliation, such as the conflict between absolute and restricted, the conflict between general and specific, and so on;
- Real or established conflict. This type of conflict occurs where two or more pieces of evidence are so contradictory that a common reconciliation between them is not possible, and each one refutes the meaning of the other. In this case, two states of balance and preference are conceivable. Balance is where two or more pieces of evidence are in opposition to each other and are equal in every respect and have no preference over each other. In this case, some jurists, based on the judgment of the intellect, believe in choice, and others believe in nullification. And preference is where two or more contradictory pieces of evidence are different in terms of their criteria for preference, and one of them is preferred over the other. In this case, in practice, the evidence that has a criterion for preference will be given priority (cf. A group of researchers, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 342, 343; Akhund Khorasani, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 497-525; Muzaffar, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 191; Na'ini, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 503; Sadr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 7, 48-60).

## **4. Verses and Narrations that Support Increasing Childbearing and Progeny**

Many commentators and jurists believe that verses and narrations indicate the prolificacy and abundance of procreation. The most important verses and narrations that indicate this issue are:

### **4.1. Verses and Narrations Encouraging Marriage**

Some verses that emphasize marriage lead to the conclusion of prolificacy and an increase in children and population, such as: "The originator of the heavens and the earth! He has made for you mates from yourselves, and from the cattle pairs; He multiplies you thereby; there is nothing like Him; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (al-Shūrā: 11) In this verse, "He multiplies you" indicates an abundance of offspring (Tabātabā'ī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 18, 25)

And also, there are many narrations that command marriage, which also emphasize prolificacy and population increase, including the Messenger of God (PBUH) who said in a hadith: "Marry, procreate, and multiply, for I will be proud of your numbers before the nations on the Day of Resurrection, even with the miscarried fetus." (Ibn Abī al-Jumhūr, 1985

AD/1405 AH: 3, 282; Majlisī, 1983 AD/1403 AH: 100, 200) "Marry so that you may be many. Indeed, I will be proud of your numbers before the nations on the Day of Resurrection, even with the miscarried fetus from the womb."

"*Nasl*" in the language means to be cut from something, and a child is called "*Nasl*" because it is formed and separated from its father's existence (Rāghib Isfahānī, n.d.: 802). Therefore, the command verb "*Tanāsalū*" in the narration means: "Have children and increase your progeny." He also said: "Marry, for on the Day of Resurrection, I will be proud of your numbers before the nations, to the extent that even the miscarried fetus will come, squatting at the gate of Paradise. It will be told: "Enter Paradise. "It will reply: "No, not until my parents enter Paradise before me." (Sadūq, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 3, 383)

And in the narrations of the Sunni school, it is stated: "*al-Bayhaqī* narrates in his *Sunan* from *Abī Amāmah* who said: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Marry, for I will be proud of your numbers before the nations on the Day of Resurrection, and do not be like the monks of the Christians." (*Bayhaqī*, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 7, 78) "Indeed, I will be proud of your numbers before the nations on the Day of Resurrection, and do not be like the monks (worshippers of the Christians)."

#### **4.2. Verses Emphasizing the Survival of Offspring**

From some verses that emphasize the importance of the survival of offspring, an abundance of children and prolificacy can be inferred, such as: "And Allah has made for you mates of your own kind, and has made for you, from your mates, children and grandchildren, and has provided you with good things. Do they then believe in falsehood and disbelieve in the favor of Allah?" (al-Nahl: 73)

"*Hafada*" is the plural of "*Hāfid*" here, meaning grandchildren (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 11, 316).

In another verse, He says: "Your women are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when or as you will, and send ahead for yourselves." (al-Baqarah: 223) The verse in question is in the position of stating the woman's share in procreating and preserving offspring, and the repetition of "tilth" is due to the importance of the issue of progeny and its emphasis (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 11, 200).

#### **4.3. Verses Guaranteeing Sustenance**

"*Rizq*" (sustenance) means continuous giving and bestowal. And since divine sustenance is His continuous bestowal to beings, it is called "*Rizq*." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 9, 16) From some verses that emphasize the guarantee of sustenance by God Almighty, the abundance of offspring and prolificacy can be inferred, such as: "And marry the single among you and the righteous among your male and female slaves. If they should be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty, and Allah is all-encompassing and all-knowing." (al-Nūr: 32) Although this verse is about the issue of marriage, some commentators have considered the purpose of marriage to be the abundance of offspring and the abundance of the community (Tayyib, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 8, 247).

In another verse, He says: "And do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and for them." (al-An‘ām: 151) "Say: "Come, I will recite what your Lord has

prohibited to you; that you associate nothing with Him, and to parents, goodness, and do not kill your children out of fear of poverty. We will provide for you and for them." And He also says: "And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We will provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is a great sin." (al-*Isrā'*: 31) The difference between these two verses is that the first verse, with the context of "Out of poverty," is addressed to poor or less affluent families, and the second verse, with the context of "Fear of poverty," is addressed to wealthy families who are afraid that the support of more children will diminish their wealth (Rāwandī, 1985 AD/1405 AH: 2, 36). "*Imlāq*" means financial destitution ('Arūsī Ḥuwayzī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 3, 161).

#### 4.4. Verses on Children Helping Parents

The Holy Quran and narrations consider children as helpers to their parents: "And I said, "Ask forgiveness of your Lord; indeed, He is a perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continual] showers and give you increase in wealth and sons and make for you gardens and make for you rivers." (Nūḥ: 10-13) "Assistance" means to provide help after another help, and "Help" means anything that helps a person reach their need, and wealth and children are the closest initial helps for the human community to reach its goals (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 5, 357). "Then We gave you back the turn to prevail over them, and We aided you with wealth and sons and made you more in number." (al-*Isrā'*: 6) "*Nafīr*" is a collective noun and means a group of men. Some have said it is the plural of "*Nafar*" and originally comes from the root "*Nafr*" (on the same pattern as "*Afw*") meaning to move and turn toward something. For this reason, a group that has the power to move towards something is called "*Nafīr*." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 12, 27) In this verse, God introduces children as helpers. And also, some commentators, based on the context of the verse, have considered the increase of wealth and children to be a cause of strength, power, and victory over enemies (Tabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 6, 615).

"Wealth and sons are the adornment of the worldly life." (al-Kahf: 46) In another verse, He says: "And He has aided you with cattle and sons." (al-Shu'arā': 142) This expression is repeated in various verses of the Quran, where when counting material blessings, it first refers to "Wealth" and then to "Human power," which is the guardian and preserver and developer of wealth, and this seems to be a natural order, not that wealth has more importance (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 1, 37). Imam *Sajjād* (AS) said: "From a man's happiness is that he has children to help him." (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 6, 2)

#### 4.5. Verses and Narrations Prohibiting Child Killing and Abortion

In the Holy Quran, verses 151 of *al-Anām* and 31 of *al-Isrā'*, which indicate the prohibition of child killing and abortion, also indicate the abundance of procreation. There are also many narrations on this matter, including: "The authentic narration of *Ishāq ibn 'Ammār*," who says: "I said to *Abū al-Hasan* (AS): "A woman is afraid of getting pregnant and takes a medicine and aborts what is in her womb? "The Imam said: "She should not do this. "I said: "It is nothing but a drop of semen. "The Imam (AS) said: "The first thing that is created is the semen. "(Ḥurr Ḥāmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 29, 26) In this narration, the Imam (AS) considers taking medicine to abort a fetus to be forbidden. Also, in the authentic narration of *Abī*

'Ubaydah, it is stated: "A person asks Imam *Bāqir* (AS) what the ruling is if a woman takes a medicine to cause an abortion? "The Imam replies: "There is a blood money (*Dīya*) for it, and the woman does not receive the blood money because the woman is the killer. "(Hurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 8, 17) In this narration, the word "Killer" indicates prohibition (ibid: 28). What is understood from the evidence on abortion is the absolute prohibition of abortion.

#### **4.6. Verses and Narrations on the Impermissibility of Coitus Interruptus**

Coitus interruptus is the prevention of semen from entering the woman's womb, which prevents pregnancy (Mahmoud 'Abd al-Rahmān, n.d.: 2, 498). Some Sunni commentators, citing verses such as verse 151 of Surah *al-Anām*, which prohibits killing children due to poverty, have forbidden the preventive method of coitus interruptus, arguing that coitus interruptus causes the cessation of procreation, and the cessation of procreation is no different from the killing of procreation that is forbidden in the verse (Qurtubī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 7, 132). And verse 187 of Surah *al-Baqarah*, "So now have relations with them and seek what Allah has prescribed for you," has been cited to prohibit coitus interruptus, with the explanation that "And seek what Allah has prescribed for you" is a request for a child, and in this verse, God has commanded believers to do so (Baydāwī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 1, 126; Ālūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 462). Some have also cited hadiths that, inspired by the phrase "And when the buried infant is asked" in verse 8 of Surah *al-Takwīr*, consider coitus interruptus a type of burying a girl alive (Ibn Kathīr, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 8, 332; Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 10, 673), which is a non-direct encouragement for population increase and procreation.

And also, some sayings of the Messenger of God (PBUH) indicate the impermissibility of coitus interruptus, such as his saying: "Coitus interruptus is the hidden burying of a girl alive." (Hurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 14, 106) And in another place, he has forbidden coitus interruptus from a free woman unless with her permission (Nūrī, 1946 AD/1366 AH: 2, 579). From these narrations, it is understood that ejaculation outside the woman's womb is not permissible for the purpose of prolificacy and population increase.

#### **4.7. Hadiths on the Pride in the Muslim Population**

There are authentic narrations from the Messenger of God (PBUH) that consider procreation as a source of pride for the Muslim community and their glory over other nations on the Day of Resurrection. The most important of them are:

1. In a hadith from Imam *Šādiq* (AS), we read: "A group of our companions narrated from *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad* from *Qāsim ibn Yaḥyā* from his grandfather *Ḥasan ibn Rāshīd* from *Muhammad ibn Muslim* from *Abī 'Abdillāh* who said: The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Increase the child, so that I may be proud of your numbers before the nations tomorrow." (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 6, 2)
2. Imam Muhammad *Bāqir* (AS) says: "*Al-Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb* narrated from *al-'Alā' ibn Razīn* from *Muhammad ibn Muslim* from *Abī Ja'far* who said: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Marry a virgin who is fertile and do not marry a beautiful barren woman, for I will be proud of your numbers before the nations on the Day of Resurrection." (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 5, 333) In this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) has commanded to marry a fertile

virgin and has forbidden marrying a beautiful barren woman. Although the command appears to be obligatory and the prohibition appears to be forbidden, but considering the reason mentioned later in the hadith, which is pride in the abundance of the population, from this hadith, marriage to a fertile virgin woman is inferred.

In the narrations of the Sunni school, it is also stated: "Hākim in his *al-Mustadrak* narrates from *Ma'qal ibn Sayyār* who said: "A man came to the Messenger of God (PBUG) and said: "O! Messenger of God, I have found a woman of good lineage and wealth, but she does not bear children. Should I marry her?" "The Messenger of God (PBUH) forbade him. Then he came to him a second time and said the same thing, and he forbade him. Then he came to him a third time and said the same thing. The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Marry the loving and fertile one, for I will be proud of your numbers before the nations." (Hākim Nīshābūrī, 2024 AD/1445 AH: 20, 162) "A man came to the Messenger of God (PBUH) and said: "O! Messenger of God, I have found a very beautiful woman and I have fallen in love with her and I want to marry her, but she is not fertile and does not bear children. "The Prophet said: "Do not marry her. "The man repeated his words, and the Prophet again said: "Do not marry her. "It is clear that Islam is interested in a person marrying a woman who is fertile and bears children."

## 5. Verses and Narrations Affirming Population Control

In the Holy Quran and narrations, some things are seen that indicate population control and a decrease in children, and they apparently conflict with the verses and narrations of prolificacy. The most important of them are:

### 5.1. The Verse on Mothers Breastfeeding

Among the verses indicating population control is verse 233 of Surah *al-Baqarah*: "And mothers shall breastfeed their children for a full two years, for those who wish to complete the breastfeeding. And upon the father is their provision and their clothing according to what is reasonable. No soul is tasked beyond its capacity." In this verse, the duration of breastfeeding is two years. During this period, breastfeeding causes a cessation of ovulation and disrupts the menstrual cycle in women, and pregnancy does not occur (cf. Kalantari, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 140). The continuation of the verse states that "No soul is tasked beyond its capacity," which is a prohibition of what is not bearable. If parents want to have a child during this period, it will cause them hardship and difficulty, which is an example of being tasked beyond one's capacity (Kitabi, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 26). Based on this, population control can be inferred from the verse.

### 5.2. Verses and Narrations on the Permissibility of Coitus Interruptus

One of the reasons for the permissibility of population control is the permissibility of coitus interruptus outside the womb. Some Sunni sources cite verse 223 of Surah *al-Baqarah*, "So go to your tillage however you wish," as an argument for this (Baghawī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 1, 290; Suyūtī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 1, 261). There are also numerous narrations on this matter. For instance, a reliable narration from Muhammad ibn Muslim recounts that the narrator asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about coitus interruptus, to which the Imam replied: "That is for the

man, he can dispose of it however he wishes." (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 5, 504; Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 149 and 21-21) This report is general, meaning it applies whether the wife is consenting or not, and whether it was stipulated in the marriage contract or not.

Also, in an authentic narration from ‘Abdul Rahmān ibn Abī ‘Abdullāh, it is stated: "I asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about coitus interruptus and he said: "That is for the man. "(ibid.) These narrations imply that ejaculation should be outside the woman's womb, and the necessary consequence of this is population control and a decrease in childbearing.

### **5.3. The Blame of Boasting and Vying for Abundance of Children**

Opponents of population growth believe that the Holy Quran not only does not encourage population growth but also condemns boasting about the abundance of children.

"The mutual rivalry (and boasting) in worldly things diverts you, until you visit the graves (and count your deceased)." (al-Takāthur: 1-2) It is understood from these verses that the condemnation of boasting about children implies population control and a decrease in population, which contradicts a large number of children and population growth.

### **5.4. Children as a Trial and an Enemy**

The apparent meaning of some verses is that children are a trial and an enemy to a person: "And know that your wealth and your children are a test and that with God is a great reward." (al-Anfāl: 8) Also, regarding children being a trial, it is stated:

"O! You who have believed, indeed, among your wives and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But if you pardon, overlook, and forgive - then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful." (al-Taghābun, 14)

It is understood from these verses that children are a trial and an enemy to a person and one should be cautious of them. As a result, this contradicts and is inconsistent with the verses that indicate a large population and implies population control and a decrease in population.

### **5.5. Chastity of the Soul**

In verse 33 of Surah *al-Nūr*, God commands those who cannot afford marriage to remain chaste: "And let those who find not the means for marriage keep themselves chaste until God enriches them from His grace." Based on this verse, the consequence of remaining chaste is a form of planning for population control and family planning (cf. Alaei and Al Rasoul, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 146).

### **5.6. The Hadith: "Few Dependents Are One of the Two Forms of Comfort"**

The hadith "Few Dependents" is one of the narrations that contradicts the narrations on having many children and is against a large number of children. This hadith is found in reliable sources such as *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Wisdom, 141), *Qurb al-Isnād*, *Tuhaf al-‘Uqūl* (Ibn Shu‘bah, 1943 AD/1363 AH), *Da‘ā’im al-Islām* (Ibn Ḥayyūn, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 2, 255), *al-Khiṣāl* (1943 AD/1363 AH: 2, 630), and ‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (AS) (Ṣadūq, 1958 AD/1378 AH: 2, 53).

The first narrator of this saying is the Prophet (PBUH). The Imams (AS)—such as Imam

Ali (AS), Imam *Sādiq* (AS), and Imam *Jawād* (AS)—also repeated his saying.

Based on this narration, those who support a decrease in childbearing and population control believe that having many children deprives parents of their comfort. Consequently, for their greater comfort, they should have fewer dependents and mouths to feed.

**5.7.** Hadith: "Three things are among the greatest afflictions: a large number of dependents, overwhelming debt, and chronic illness." (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 331)

**5.8.** Hadith: "Seek refuge in God from poverty and a large number of dependents." (Payandeh, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 80)

**5.9.** Hadith: "The head of a family is ruined"

One of the hadiths that contradicts the narrations on increasing childbearing is the hadith "The head of a family is ruined." In this hadith, Imam *Ridā* (AS) says: "My grandfather, Imam *Ja'far Sādiq* (AS), passed by a fisherman and asked him: "What kind of animal do you most often catch in your net? "The fisherman said: "Birds with chicks. "The Imam then passed by him, saying: "The head of a family is ruined; the head of a family is ruined." (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 72, 104, Hadith 12) This saying of the Imam (AS) is a metaphor, meaning that the more dependents a person has, the more hardship and difficulty they will face in providing food and other daily needs compared to others; based on this narration, Imam *Sādiq* (AS) describes a person who has a family and children as "Ruined" and is against it.

**5.10.** The Prophet's Prayer against having many children

In a prayer, the Prophet of God (PBUH) curses the enemies of the Prophet and his family by wishing them much wealth and children, saying:

"O! God, give Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and those who love Muhammad and the family of Muhammad chastity and sufficiency, and give those who hate Muhammad and the family of Muhammad abundant wealth and children." (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 2, 140) From this narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt's (AS) prayer for abundant wealth and children for their enemies, one can infer the concept of population control.

## 6. Solutions for Resolving the Contradiction between Narrations on Population Growth and Population Control

It seems there are two fundamental ways to solve the contradiction between the verses and narrations on population growth and population control. The first approach is the application of a governmental decree in the context of population growth and control narrations. This is because what is derived from the verses and narrations on population growth is the primary and initial ruling of the desirability of marriage and the preference and desirability of increasing the population and having children. It is not an obligation or a prohibition. The mere desirability and preference are not evidence of its being absolute in all conditions, times, and places (cf. Alaei and Al Rasoul, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 154).

However, if an Islamic government and society face individual or social problems due to population increase or decrease, the Islamic ruler or jurist can enact a law according to the needs of the time to manage population growth or control. Accordingly, each of the verses and narrations on population growth and control indicates a specific time for growth and

another time for control. As a result, there will be no contradiction between them.

The second approach is to resolve the contradiction by applying the rules of contradiction, equilibrium, and preference. Shi'a jurists, when faced with a contradiction between two or more pieces of evidence, act as follows: "First, they try to resolve the contradiction if it is of the preliminary type, such as the contradiction between a general and a specific statement or an absolute and a restricted one, etc., through a conventional reconciliation. If conventional reconciliation is not possible, whichever piece of evidence is more likely to be correct is taken, and the other is set aside. If neither is more likely than the other, the rule of choice or mutual invalidation is applied, depending on the existing difference of opinion." (cf. Ṣadr, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 449; Muzaffar, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 2, 193; A Group of Researchers, 2012 AD/1392 SH: 312)

Based on what has been stated, in the contradiction between verses and narrations on population growth and control, three scenarios are conceivable:

1. Contradiction between verses on population growth and verses on population control. Examples include the contradiction between verses encouraging marriage (al-Shūrā: 11), verses emphasizing the survival of the lineage (al-Nahl: 73 and al-Baqarah: 223), verses guaranteeing sustenance (al-Nūr, 32, al-An‘ām: 151, al-Isrā’: 31), verses on children's assistance (Nūh: 10-13, al-Isrā’: 6, al-Shu‘arā’: 142), prohibiting infanticide and abortion (al-An‘ām: 151 and al-Isrā’: 31), and the impermissibility of coitus interruptus (al-Baqarah: 187, al-An‘ām: 151) on the one hand, and verses on mothers' breastfeeding (al-Baqarah: 223), the condemnation of boasting about children (al-Takāthur: 1-2), and children being a trial and an enemy (al-Anfāl: 8 and al-Taghābun: 14) on the other hand. Contradiction between verses on population growth and narrations on population control. This can be imagined in two ways: "First, the contradiction between the aforementioned verses on population growth and the narrations on the permissibility of coitus interruptus (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 5, 504), the hadith of "Few dependents," (Nahj al-Balāghah, Wisdom 141) the hadith of "A large number of dependents," (Tamimī Āmidī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 331) the hadith of "Three things are among the greatest afflictions," (Payandeh, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 80) the hadith of "The head of a family is ruined," (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 7, 104) and the narration of the Prophet's curse for having abundant wealth and children. "(Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 12, 140)

2. Second, the contradiction between verses on population control and narrations on population growth. This includes the contradiction between the aforementioned verses and narrations encouraging marriage (Ṣadūq, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 3, 383 and Ibn Abī al-Jumhūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 3, 282), the narration on children helping parents (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 6, 2), narrations prohibiting infanticide and abortion (Hurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 9, 6 and 8, 17), narrations on the permissibility of coitus interruptus (Hurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 14, 106), and narrations on the Prophet's boasting about the population of Muslims (Kulaynī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 6, 2 and 5, 332).

## 7. Contradiction between Narrations on Population Growth and Narrations on Population Control Similar to the Contradiction between the Aforementioned Narrations

### 7.1. *Contradiction between Verses on Population Growth and Verses on Population Control*

In the case of a contradiction between two verses, which means a contradiction in the apparent meaning of two verses, if there is a relationship of general and specific or absolute and restricted between them, the general is interpreted based on the specific, and the absolute based on the restricted, if possible. If there is no such relationship, the one with the later date of revelation is considered the abrogator (*Nāsikh*) of the other and is followed. If the date of revelation for neither is known, or if the order of their revelation is unclear, then a choice is made between them (cf. Khu'ī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 705; Khiḍrī, n.d.: 300; A Group of Researchers, 2012 AD/1392 SH: 310).

Based on this, regarding the contradiction between verses on population growth and population control, it seems that, firstly, there is no contradiction between them. The argument based on verse 33 of Surah *al-Baqarah* about the two-year breastfeeding period is flawed. Breastfeeding does not necessarily mean fewer children, as it has happened among women that they became pregnant while breastfeeding and also had their menstrual period after childbirth (cf. Ashouri et al., 2023 AD/1402 SH: 6). Also, the argument based on verses that condemn boasting about children and describe them as a trial and an enemy is incomplete regarding population control. These verses are not meant to negate procreation, increase, and abundance of progeny, but rather to explain a certain kind of relationship between parents and children where parents have been led astray due to their improper interaction with their children.

Secondly, even if there is a contradiction between them, one can reconcile the first group of verses, which indicate population growth, with the second group of verses, which indicate population control, through conventional reconciliation, based on the law of contradiction between verses.

### 7.2. *Contradiction between Verses and Narrations on Population Growth and Population Control*

As we know, two scenarios are conceivable in the contradiction between verses and narrations on population growth and population control: "First, the contradiction between verses on population growth and narrations on population control. "In this case, the verses on population growth are preferred because, according to the rules of contradiction, if there is a contradiction between the apparent meaning of the Quran and a singular narration, the apparent meaning of the Quran is preferred. The reason is that the Quran is definitive in its origin, while the narration is presumptive in its origin. The majority of jurists believe that if possible, one should reconcile the apparent meaning of the Quran and a singular narration, and if reconciliation is not possible, the apparent meaning of the Quran takes precedence over the singular narration (cf. Fāḍil Tūnī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 322; A Group of Researches, 2012 AD/1392 SH: 330).

Accordingly, since the verses on population growth are definitive in their meaning and origin and the narrations on population control are presumptive in their meaning and origin, the verses are preferred.

In the second scenario, which is the contradiction between verses on population control and narrations on population growth, the narrations on population growth are preferred. This is because, as we have learned, the verses that are used to argue for population control are not meant to negate procreation and population increase to the extent that they would contradict the narrations on population growth. Accordingly, in this case, there is no contradiction, and thus the narrations on population growth are preferred.

### **7.3. *Contradiction between Narrations on Population Growth and Narrations on Population Control***

It seems that most of the narrations on population growth and population control have no issues in terms of their chain of transmission and are considered reliable and authentic. The narration from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is confirmed as being narrated by "A Number of companions" from Ahmad ibn Muhammad (cf. Kashshī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 556; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 123; Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 778). Also, *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, Qāsim ibn Yaḥyā ibn Rāshīd*, and *Muhammad ibn Muslim* are trustworthy and reliable (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 778), although some have criticized *Qāsim ibn Yaḥyā ibn Rāshīd* (Ibn Ghāḍa’irī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 1, 86). However, Ayatollah *Khu’ī* considers him trustworthy (*Khu’ī*, n.d.: 14, 56, and 64). Also, in the hadith of Imam Bāqir (AS), the narrators are *Hasan ibn Maḥjūb*, *‘Alā’ ibn Zarrīn*, and *Muhammad ibn Muslim*, whom *Rijālī* scholars unanimously agree on their trustworthiness (Kashshī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 556; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 123). And in the third hadith from Imam Ṣādiq (AS), the narrators are *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad*, *Hasan ibn Maḥbūb*, and *‘Abdullāh ibn Sinān*, who are also trustworthy (Ṭūsī, 1953 AD/1373 AH: 355; Kashshī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 410). Majlisī also considers the narrators of the fourth hadith trustworthy (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 20, 10).

Regarding the hadiths on population control, the most important of which is "Few dependents are one of the two forms of comfort," a review of the chain of transmission of this hadith shows that its chain is authentic, and the narrators in its chain—such as *Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā*, *Muhammad ibn ‘Umayr*, *Mūsā ibn Bakr*, *Ibn Abi ‘Umayr*, and *Zurāra*—are considered trustworthy by the Shi'a (Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 197; Kashshī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 556; Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 7, 97; ‘Allāma Ḥillī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 238).

However, in terms of meaning, all narrations on population growth indicate the desirability of having children. But the narrations on population control do not indicate population control. First, in the first three narrations, the word is used. In jurisprudence, this term refers to the individuals under a man's care, meaning wives, children, and those who he supports. This includes children, wives, servants, students, and relatives, and children are only one of the meanings of *‘Ā’ilah*. Therefore, the hadith "Few Dependents" is restricted by the hadiths that indicate the desirability of increasing and growing the number of children. As a result, the mentioned hadith means that having few wives is one of the forms of comfort.

Second, the hadith "The head of a family is ruined" is a statement of sympathy for the

one with a family, not a condemnation of a large family or an increase in children. Third, the narration about a large number of children being a calamity is weak in its chain of transmission because no chain is mentioned for it (Māmqānī, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 1, 35). Fourth, although the narration that considers a sufficient number of children as desirable is trustworthy due to its narrator, *Husayn ibn Yazīd Nawfalī* (Khu'ī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 3, 113), Allamah *Majlisī* explains it by writing that in such narrations, an abundance of wealth and children is blameworthy only if it distracts a person from remembering God and the afterlife. If that is not the case, and the goal is obedience to God and an increase in those who worship Him, then it is a divine blessing that He gives to whomever He deems worthy (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 8, 330). Fifth, the hadiths that permit coitus interruptus have a contradiction.

There is a disagreement about the type of contradiction that exists between these hadiths. Some believe that the contradiction is of the absolute and restricted type (Nuri Hamadani, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 40). In this type of contradiction, reconciliation of meaning is possible. The reconciliation of meaning is that coitus interruptus is disliked without the woman's consent, and if she consents, the dislike is removed. Others believe that it is a fundamental contradiction (Nuri Hamadani, *ibid*: 40). In a fundamental contradiction, reconciliation of meaning is not possible, and one must act based on the principles of preference. In this contradiction, the side that says coitus interruptus is permissible is preferred, and the side that says the wife's consent is a condition is interpreted to mean that without the wife's consent, it is disliked (Nuri Hamadani, *ibid*: 40). Accordingly, the narrations on a decrease in childbearing do not contradict the narrations on abundance and increase in childbearing.

## Conclusion

1. From a general perspective, there is a contradiction among the verses and narrations on the topic of childbearing. Some verses and narrations indicate an increase and abundance of childbearing, while others oppose an increase and indicate population control and a decrease in childbearing. The verses and narrations that encourage marriage, indicate the importance of the survival of the lineage, guarantee human sustenance, mention children's assistance for parents, and prohibit infanticide and abortion, as well as the hadiths on the Prophet's boasting about the number of Muslims, explicitly indicate population growth and an increase in childbearing. On the other hand, the verses on mothers' breastfeeding, the condemnation of boasting about children, children being a trial and an enemy, and chastity of the soul, as well as the narrations on few dependents and the ruin of the head of a family, indicate population control and a decrease in childbearing.
2. There are two fundamental ways to resolve the contradiction between the verses and narrations on population growth and population control. The first is the application of a governmental decree in the field of population growth and control narrations. The second is the application of the rules of contradiction, equilibrium, and preference.
3. In the first approach, the primary and initial ruling of the verses and narrations is the desirability of a large number of children. However, if an Islamic society faces individual or social problems due to certain conditions, the ruler or jurist can enact laws according to the needs of the time. In this case, with the enactment of governmental decrees, the primary

ruling of population growth can be changed to population decrease and vice versa. Accordingly, no contradiction will arise between the Quranic and narrative teachings regarding the number of children.

4. In the second approach, the contradiction between the verses and narrations on population growth and population control can be divided into three general scenarios: "The contradiction between verses on population growth and verses on population control, the contradiction between verses on population growth and narrations on population control, and the contradiction between narrations on population growth and narrations on population control. " In the contradiction between verses on population growth and verses on population control, the verses on population growth are preferred. This is because the verses on population control are not meant to address procreation and population increase, but rather a certain kind of interaction between parents and children. Also, in the contradiction between verses and narrations on population growth and control, two scenarios are possible: "Sometimes there is a contradiction between verses on population growth and narrations on population control. In this case, the verses on population growth are preferred because they are definitive in their meaning and origin, whereas the narrations on population control are presumptive in their meaning and origin. "And sometimes there is a contradiction between verses on population control and narrations on population growth. In this case, the narrations on population growth are preferred due to the lack of indication in the verses on population control regarding procreation and population increase. Also, in the contradiction between narrations on population growth and narrations on population control, since the contradiction between these narrations is of the absolute and restricted type, the narrations on population control are restricted by the narrations on population growth. As a result, there will be no contradiction between the verses and narrations on population growth and control.

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