STUDY OF THE CRUDE BIRTH RATE AND DELIVERY CONDITION AMONG THE QASHQAI TRIBE, SOUTHERN IRAN, 1973*

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of a cross-sectional demographic survey that was conducted among the Qashqai Tribe of southern Iran in 1973, the crude birth rate was estimated at 48.2 per thousand per year.

The most productive age group was 25—29 years. Forty-nine point seven per cent (49.7%) or about one half of the total births occurred among married women aged 20 to 29 years. Eighty-seven point three per cent (87.3%) of the deliveries took place in tents, only one per cent at maternity hospitals. Ninety point one per cent (90.1%) of babies were delivered with the help of relatives and friends, while only 6.9 per cent of all deliveries took place with the aid of midwives. Eighty-nine point seven per cent (89.7%) of deliveries were performed without medical expenses.

INTRODUCTION

A demography, health and morbidity survey was conducted among the Qashqai Tribe, southern Iran in 1973. An attempt was made to study vital events such as births, deaths, migration. The present paper deals with the subject of crude birth rate and the delivery condition in this tribe.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Qashqai is a Turkish ethnic tribe, and is one of the largest and best organized tribal groups of Southern Iran. It is best defined by political and geographical criteria. This tribe consists of tent dwellers, pastoral sheep raising nomads who with regular and periodic seasonal movements migrate to the arid zones and mountainous areas of the province of Fars, south of Iran. A rough estimate of the total of 20,000 migratory tents or households exist in this tribe.

Sampling: The formal framework of tribal organization of the Qashc tribe in descending order is: Tribe (11) clan (Tayefe), sub-clan (Tireh), section (obeh or bonkou) and household (tent or family). The estimated household list was prepared by interviewing the heads of clans and sub-clans plus the statistics from the Malaria Eradication unit, Ministry of Health, Iran.

The survey was based on the availability of existing manpower and limitation of time due to the mobility of the population, therefore the size of the sample was selected about 10 per cent of the total households of the nomad population in the area

The sample design of the survey was prepared to give each household in the tribe an equal chance of being included within the sample. A sample of 3214 households were selected by the method of two stage (clan, sub-clan) randomised cluster sampling. It was in the following stages:

(1) The first stage of the sampling unit was a clan. Four out of seven clans were selected with probability proportionate to the estimated number of household in each clan by random; and

(2) The second stage of the sampling unit was a sub-clan. A list of the total number of sub-clans and households in the selected clans, in alphabetical order, was used. Out of the 107 sub-clans including 9796 households, 21 sub-clans or 3214 households were selected by random for this survey.

In the household survey, each married woman was asked to state the number of children who had been born to her within the last 12 months to survey (from the time of previous summer quarter to the present summer quarter).

As Qashqai is a moslem tribe with special social condition therefore birth out of wedlock is scrutinized among them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The measure known as the crude birth rate is by so far the most commonly used index of the rate of reproduction. In its crudest and

simplest form, the birth rate is merely the ratio of the number of live births during one year to the total number of persons in the population. Although the birth rate gives the general picture of reproduction, it is of limited value because it does not take into account such variations as the age distribution of the female population, nor of the population of females married.

In the present survey 817 live births were recorded among 16,939 people, and the crude birth rate was estimated as 817/16,939 x 1000 = 48.2 per thousand per year, and it is close to the estimated birth rate for the whole country (Iran), which was 48 per thousand in 1971 (Iranian J.P.H. 1973).

For the evaluation of the accuracy of the data collected on the crude birth rate the indirect method of estimated (Brass Technique for developing community by 1964, 1968) was used it was shown that the figures on fertility by direct observation method is almost similar to those obtained by estimation (Motabar *et al* 1976).

The cases that may have been missed in the survey were those infants who were born alive but died shortly after birth. We brought the attention of the interviewers to this point by putting remark about it in the questionnaire.

Table 1

Age specific birth rates and distribution of live births during the last 12 months according to the age of the mothers.

Age Group	No. of females	No. of married women	No. of live births	Age specific p. 1000 females	Age specific p. 1000 married women	% of live births	Cumulative percentage
15–19	860	146	31	36.0	212.3	3.8	3.8
20–24	629	407	166	263.9	407.9	20.3	24.1
25–29	605	539	240	396.7	445.3	29.4	53.5
30–34	465	435	187	402.1	429.9	22.9	76.4
35–39	447	428	137	306.5	320.1	16.8	93.2
40–44	235	206	56	238.3	271.8	6.8	100.0
Total	3241	2161	817	252.1	378.0	100.0	

Eighty-four out of 3,120 females aged 15—44 years were reported literate (2.7%), and the majority of these literate women were found in the age group 15—19 years. Therefore, almost all children born in the nomadic society were born to the women who reported that they could not read or write.

The distribution of "live births" during the last 12 months according to the age group of currently married women aged 15—44 is shown in Table 1.

According to the figures the most productive age group was 25—29 (29.4 per cent of the total births, or 43.4 per cent of the married women aged 25—29 years had live births).

Forty-nine point seven per cent (49.7%) or about one-half of the total births occurred among married women aged 20—29 years.

For every 1000 women aged 30 to 34 years, 402 children were born, while in the case of females aged 15—19 years, only 36 children per 1000 women were born.

The overall annual fertility was estimated as 252.1 children per 1000 women aged 15—44 years (general fertility rate), or 378 per 1000 married women.

Place of delivery and distribution of live births is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Place of last live birth

Location	Number	Percentage
Tent	713	87.3%
On pathways	51	6.2%
Residential house	16	1.9%
Maternity hospital	8	1.0%
Others & unknown	29	3.6%
Total	817	100.0%

A glance at this table indicates that 87.3 per cent of the children were born in tents. Delivery at maternity hospitals and rural health centres was only 1.0 per cent of the total, and this may be due to those abnormal labour occurring while passing through neighbouring villages or towns. Six point two per cent (6.2%) were delivered en route during migration, and 1.9 per cent were born at home (residential house).

Type of helpers at Delivery: the type of helpers at delivery are classified according to Table 3. Ninety point one per cent of babies were delivered with the help of relatives and friends, while only 6.9 per cent of all deliveries took place with the aid of midwives.

Table 3
Type of Helper at Delivery

Type of helper	No. of births	Percentage
Relatives and friends	736	90.1%
Untrained local midwife	28	3.4%
Trained local midwife	15	1.8%
Educated midwife	14	1.7%
Physician	3	0.4%
Unstated	21	2.6%
Total	817	100.0%

It should be mentioned that at the time of the survey only 22 rural midwives were at work in the whole tribal community of the Fars Province.

The medical expenses of delivery: The medical expenses of the delivery of 817 "live births" were calculated as shown in table 4 according to the table, 89.7 per cent of the total deliveries were performed without medical expense.

Table 4
Medical Expenses for the Last Delivery (in 10 Rials)

	No Expenses	10-49	50-99	100-499	500+	Unknown	Total
Number of deliveries	733	30	11	11	4	28	817
Percentage of delivery according to medical expenses	89.7	3.7	1.3	1.3	0.5	3.4	99.9

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