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The Impact of Population Growth on National Power in Iran: An Analytical Study of Islamic Lifestyle from the Perspective of Grand Ayatollah Martyr Sayyed Ali Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Grand Ayatollah Martyr Sayyed Ali Khamenei has consistently emphasized the strategic importance of population growth for national power. In the Second Step Statement of the Revolution, he explicitly stated that one of the most important foundations of national power is the youth and vitality of the population. The objective of this research is to examine this premise through scientific and Islamic lenses, illustrating how population expansion rooted in Islamic living standards facilitates national strength and the emergence of a New Islamic Civilization.

METHOD & FINDING: Using directed content analysis, this qualitative research employs documentary and library sources, including the Holy Quran, Hadiths, and statements by the former Supreme Leader of Iran. Islamic lifestyle, with core components such as timely marriage, ease of marriage, childbearing as a divine blessing, family-centeredness, raising righteous children, contentment, and trust in God, directly contributes to population growth and age-structure rejuvenation. In this respect, four causal mechanisms are identified: economic, innovation, security, and civilizational.

CONCLUSION: Population growth policies aligned with Islamic lifestyle principles can serve demographic, religious, and strategic objectives simultaneously, providing a comprehensive framework for national power and civilizational progress.

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Introduction

In the intellectual system of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, based on Quranic teachings and Prophetic tradition, power is not merely a material and military concept but a manifestation of faith, piety, knowledge, and efficient human capital. In this regard, Allah (SWT) said: "*There should be a community among you summoning to good, and bidding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong*" (Quran 3:104).

This community (ummah) cannot be formed without a faithful, young, and motivated population. As highlighted by scholars such as Huntington (1996, p. 87) and Weiner (1971, p. 45), population size and composition have historically been central determinants of national power and civilizational influence. The relationship between demography and national strength has been a recurring theme in political demography (Eberstadt, 2019, p. 12).

Ayatollah Khamenei repeatedly emphasized the strategic importance of population growth. Within the Second Step Statement of the Revolution, he declared: "One of the most important foundations of national power is the youth and vitality of the population" (Khamenei, 2018, p. 12). Additionally, in the General Population Policies, he detailed 14 strategic clauses that designate population growth as a national priority (Khamenei, 2014). Economic Mechanism (Khamenei, 2014). In a speech addressing civil registration officials, he clarified: "A country with a young and growing population will certainly be powerful. Population decline will lead the country to aging and decline" (Khamenei, 2015).

Even though he stresses the immediate link between a growing population and national strength, UN data indicates that Iran's total fertility rate (TFR) has dropped below the replacement threshold to 1.6 children per woman (UN, 2024, p. 89). This demographic decline threatens indicators of national power, including economic growth, military deterrence, and civilizational aspirations. Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald (2008, p. 62) observe that Iran underwent a remarkably fast drop in fertility, falling from approximately seven children per woman in the 1980s to sub-replacement levels by the early 2000s.

The primary issue addressed by this study is the growing discrepancy between strategic demographic goals and real-world population results, alongside the lack of a thorough scientific-Islamic rationale that connects demographic growth to national strength through an Islamic way of life.

This research seeks to answer the fundamental question: How does population increase based on Islamic lifestyle contribute to the continuity of Iran's national power and the realization of the new Islamic civilization?

To address this primary question, four secondary questions are also examined:

1- What are the core components of Islamic lifestyle that affect fertility behavior?

2- Through what causal mechanisms does population increase affect national power?

3- How does the Islamic lifestyle framework differ from secular demographic policies?

4- What distinguishes this study's approach from previous works?

Conceptual Framework

1. Population Growth

Population growth in this study refers to the quantitative growth of a country's population through natural increase (births

minus deaths), with particular emphasis on fertility rates above replacement level, i.e., a total fertility rate (TFR) of approximately 2.1 children per woman. However, population growth is not treated merely as a numerical variable. In accordance with Ayatollah Khamenei's General Population Policies (2014) and the Second Step Statement (2018), population growth is viewed as a strategic goal involving both numerical increase and the qualitative enhancement of human capital. The study distinguishes between two dimensions of population growth:

The numerical expansion of the population, which contributes to labor supply, domestic market size, and military recruitment;

The rejuvenation of the age structure, which ensures a higher proportion of young, productive, and innovative citizens.

This dual conceptualization aligns with the literature on the demographic dividend (cf. Bloom & Canning, 2004; Lee & Mason, 2010), which emphasizes that population growth is most beneficial when it occurs alongside investments in education, health, and employment.

2. National Power

National power is the capacity of a nation-state to achieve its strategic objectives, protect its sovereignty, and exercise influence in regional and global affairs. In mainstream political science, national power is typically conceptualized through material indicators such as GDP, military expenditure, technological capacity, and population size (cf. Organski, 1958; Huntington, 1996; Kugler & Tammen, 2012).

However, this study adopts an integrated Islamic-political science framework in which national power includes both material and non-material dimensions. Drawing on Ayatollah Khamenei's statements, particularly in the Second Step Statement (2018), national power in the Islamic paradigm encompasses the following elements:

1- Demographic power, i.e., a young, faithful, and educated population.

2- Economic power, i.e., productive capacity and resistance economy.

3- Military power, i.e., deterrence and defense capabilities.

4- Scientific power, i.e., knowledge production and innovation.

5- Cultural power, i.e., soft power and civilizational influence.

6- Spiritual power, i.e., faith, piety, and moral authority.

By using this multidimensional framework, the research explores how population growth rooted in Islamic values fosters not just material prosperity, but also the civilizational and spiritual aspects of a nation's strength.

3. New Islamic Civilization

A pivotal element of Ayatollah Khamenei's civilizational discourse is the New Islamic Civilization, which is most thoroughly detailed in his 2018 Second Step Statement of the Revolution. This concept describes an all-encompassing social, political, cultural, and economic framework rooted in Islamic values, seeking to promote global justice, rationality, spirituality, scientific advancement, and human dignity. The Supreme Leader designated seven core foundations for this civilization: research and science, ethics and spirituality, production and economy, anti-corruption and justice, political autonomy, international prestige and national dignity, and an Islamic way of life (Khamenei, 2018, pp. 15-20). He stresssed that the

"young generation" acts as the essential driver and most vital asset for constructing this order. Within this research, the New Islamic Civilization functions as the primary dependent variable: the study suggests that growth in population following an Islamic lifestyle enhances national power, which, when accumulated, leads to the achievement of this civilizational goal. As noted by Waezi (2020, p. 52) and Wahidi (2019, p. 88), this paradigm signifies a transition from constructing states to building civilizations, where human capital—specifically a youthful, educated, and religious populace—acts as the main catalyst for development.

4. Islamic Lifestyle

The Islamic way of life comprises a collection of principles, values, practices, and traditions rooted in the Quran, the Sunnah, and the Ahl al-Bayt (PBUT), intended to secure success in both this life and the hereafter (Mutahhari, 2011, p. 34; Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 56). In the context of this research, Islamic lifestyle is not treated as a vague or abstract concept but is operationalized through the following seven measurable components:

1- timely marriage,
2- ease of marriage,
3- childbearing as a divine blessing,
4- family-centeredness,
5- raising righteous children,
6- contentment (*qana'ah*),
7- trust in God (*tawakkul*).

These components are derived directly from Ayatollah Khamenei's statements on population and from Quranic verses and Hadiths that encourage marriage and childbearing. The Islamic lifestyle framework distinguishes this study from secular demographic analyses, which typically rely on financial incentives or economic rationales for fertility decisions. Rather, the Islamic way of life focuses on value-driven changes affecting the spiritual, moral, and cultural aspects of fertility—elements frequently overlooked in standard demographic research (Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2008, p. 71; Razavi, 2018, p. 89).

According to Ayatollah Khāmeneī, Islamic living goes beyond personal piety to include domestic and private life, where the integration of faith, reason, and fairness fosters prosperity, safety, wellness, autonomy, and societal advancement (Yaqubi et al., 2025).

Literature Review

As noted by Bloom and Canning (2004, p. 32; 2006, p. 453), shifts in global demographics carry major economic implications; they demonstrated that if fertility rates drop 0.5 units below replacement, annual GDP per capita growth declines by 0.8 percent after twenty years. Lee and Mason (2010, p. 179) demonstrated that the young labor force contributed 25 to 40 percent during the region's demographic dividend (1960–1990) of East Asian economic growth. Turchin (2016, p. 89) showed that the decline of great civilizations (Rome, Ottoman, Britain) was always accompanied by population aging and declining birth rates. Abe and Hamada (2019, p. 321) concluded that Japan's fertility rate of 1.3 reduced its global economic rank from 2nd place in 1990 to 4th place in 2020. Notably, most of these scholars accept the population growth hypothesis with little qualification. Several scholars (e.g., Preston et al., 2001) contend that the link between population size and economic expansion is influenced by technological progress, institutional capability, and the quality of governance—implying that population alone

does not drive growth. Others (e.g., McNicoll, 2011) contend that rapid population growth in resource-scarce environments can create ecological and economic pressures that offset demographic dividends.

Bostan (2020, p. 89) showed that the population issue in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought is not secondary but is a matter at the level of the revolution and the system. However, Bostan's analysis remained at the level of general correlation without specifying causal mechanisms or connecting the population issue to the Islamic lifestyle framework. Waezi (2020, p. 52) analyzed the Second Step Statement from a civilizational perspective, emphasizing the central role of the young generation. Nevertheless, Waezi failed to show how rising population levels lead to civilizational advancement, merely assuming the connection instead of providing proof. Mirzaei (2021, p. 45) warned that 12 Iranian provinces have very low fertility (below 1.5). Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald (2008, p. 67) documented Iran's rapid fertility transition and analyzed its implications for family policy.

However, this study differs from and advances beyond previous research in three specific ways:

1- While previous studies focused on general population policy or civilizational discourse, this study uses Islamic lifestyle as an independent variable with seven operationalized components.

2- Whereas previous research relied on implicit correlation, this study specifies four explicit causal mechanisms: economic, innovation, security, and civilizational.

3- To bolster its arguments, this research combines qualitative textual examination with empirical evidence from outlets including The Lancet, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Global Firepower military strength index (Global Firepower, 2024, p. 12), in contrast to prior studies that were mostly limited to theoretical claims.

Research Method

This qualitative research employs directed content analysis, utilizing documentary and library sources. The dataset comprises Ayatollah Khamenei's Second Step Statement, General Population Policies, and speeches delivered between 2014 and 2021, alongside the Holy Quran, Hadiths, foundational documents, and credible local and global academic papers published from 2001 to 2025.

The thematic analysis followed the six-stage procedure recommended by Krippendorff (2018):

1- Familiarization: all of Ayatollah Khamenei's statements from 2014 to 2021, as specified in the research dataset, were read and re-read three times.

2- Coding 47 initial codes were generated from the data.

3- Theme search: codes were collated into potential themes, which were then collapsed into 12 themes and subsequently refined into four mechanisms.

4- Theme review: the identified themes were checked against the coded extracts and the entire dataset, including cross-verification with Quranic verses and Hadiths.

5- Theme definition: the specifics of each theme were refined, leading to the operationalization of the seven lifestyle components.

6- Writing up: the final analysis was produced.

To ensure the rigor of the analysis, two procedures were followed:

- Three experts in Islamic demography reviewed the coding framework and findings (member checking).
- An independent coder analyzed 20 percent of the data. The inter-coder agreement was 87 percent, with a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong reliability beyond chance agreement. This procedure followed the recommendations of Krippendorff (2018, p. 221).

The sampling method is purposive, and the data collection tool is electronic note-taking. This methodological approach follows established procedures in qualitative Islamic research (Al-Azami, 2003, p. 112; Mutahhari, 2003, p. 45).

1. Operational Components of Islamic Lifestyle on Population Growth

The content analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei's statements, along with Quranic verses and Hadiths, reveals seven core components that constitute the Islamic lifestyle framework for population growth. These components are derived directly from his population discourse, particularly from the General Population Policies (2014) and his speeches emphasizing family formation and childbearing. Every element targets a distinct facet of fertility patterns: prompt marriage manages reproductive timing, accessible marriage eliminates financial obstacles, viewing children as blessings reinterprets them as spiritual gifts, family focus offers social encouragement, raising virtuous children links reproduction to education, satisfaction lessens economic worries, and faith in God removes stress regarding livelihood.

Table 1: Operational Components of Islamic Lifestyle on Population

Component	Operational Definition	Religious Source
Timely marriage	Marriage at age 18-25	The Prophet said: "O youth, whoever among you can marry, should do so" (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol. 20, p. 17).
Ease of marriage	Low dowry (*mahr*), simple ceremony	"The best dowry is the easiest" (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol. 20, p. 23).
Childbearing as blessing	Positive attitude toward having 3+ children	"Wealth and children are adornment of life" (Quran, 18:46)
Family-centeredness	Preference for large families, extended family ties	"Affection and mercy" between spouses (Quran 30:21)
Raising righteous children	Investment in religious and moral education	The Prophet said: "The best of my Ummah are those with most children" (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol. 20, p. 98).
Contentment (*qanāʿah*)	Economic satisfaction with modest means	"God will provide for them" (Quran 6:151)
Trust in God (*tawakkul*)	Absence of economic fear preventing childbearing	"Whoever is wary of God, He shall make a way out for him" (Quran 65:2)

Figure 1. Research findings

1.2 Textual Evidence from Islamic Sources 1.2.1 First Evidence: National Power in Islamic Thought

Analyzing the Supreme Leader's remarks shows that national strength within the Islamic framework consists of six separate areas: (a) demographic power (a youth population that is both pious and educated), (b) economic power (productive abilities and a resistance-based economy), (c) military power (defensive qualities and deterrence), (d) scientific power (innovation and the creation of knowledge), (e) cultural power (civilizational impact and soft power), and (f) spiritual power (piety, faith, and moral leadership) (Khamenei, 2018, p. 15; Khamenei, 2014).

National power from an Islamic perspective is the ability of a faithful society to implement divine will on earth and establish justice and equity. Allah said: "*Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy*" (Quran 8:60). This "power" includes faith-based, demographic, economic, military, and scientific dimensions.

According to Organski (1958, p. 112) and Kugler and Tammen (2012, p. 45), power transition theory emphasizes that national power is fundamentally a function of population size, economic productivity, and political capacity. From the Leader's perspective, which integrates Islamic teachings with political science, the young, faithful, and revolutionary population is itself a component of both soft and hard power (Khamenei, 2018, p. 15).

1.2.2 Second Evidence: Textual Evidence from the Leader's Statements on Population

Content analysis of the Supreme Leader's key statements reveals a consistent causal chain: From the Second Step Statement of the Revolution (2018):

"One of the most important foundations of national power is the youth and vitality of the population. The young generation is the symbol of hope for the future and the main capital for building the New Islamic Civilization" (Khamenei, 2018, p. 12).

From the General Population Policies (2014): The document explicitly states: "Optimization of the population structure, increase in fertility rate, and rejuvenation of the population are among the fundamental pillars of national power" (Khamenei, 2014, p. 2).

From the Speech to Civil Registration Officials (2015) "A country with a young and growing population will certainly be powerful. Population decline will lead the country to aging and decline. Do not let the enemy's propaganda about population control and economic fears prevent you from childbearing" (Khamenei, 2015).

1.2.3 Third Evidence: Quranic and Hadith Foundations of Population Growth

The Holy Quran has positively and encouragingly addressed childbearing and population growth in numerous verses. Allah said, "*Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of the world*" (Quran 18:46). Also, "*Do not kill your children because of poverty; We will provide for you and for them*" (Quran 6:151). As Tabataba'i (2010, Vol. 15, p. 234) explains, these verses establish the principle that children are a divine blessing and that economic fears should not prevent childbearing.

Islamic traditions contain an extensive chapter on the virtue of marriage, childbearing, and the multiplication of the Muslim population. The Prophet said: "The best of my

Ummah are those who have the most children" (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol. 20, p. 98). Al-Ghazali (2010, p. 78) in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din emphasized that marriage and family formation are half of faith, underscoring the spiritual significance of population growth.

1.3. Analytical Model and Causal Mechanisms

Proposed Conceptual Model: From Lifestyle to Civilization

Based on the previously discussed theoretical principles and the seven operational pillars of the Islamic way of life, this study proposes a conceptual model that illustrates the causal connection between population expansion, national power, and the rise of a New Islamic Civilization. In this context, the independent variable is the Islamic way of life, assessed through seven specific components: marrying at the right time, ease of marriage, seeing children as divine blessings, putting family first, raising righteous children, experiencing contentment, and remaining steadfast in faith in Allah. These components are expected to influence fertility behavior, leading to both a quantitative increase in population and a qualitative improvement in human capital. This demographic transition subsequently triggers four mediating channels: (1) the economic mechanism, involving shifts in labor supply and the growth of local markets; (2) the innovation mechanism, via youthful creativity and the founding of new companies; (3) the security mechanism, by increasing military recruitment and strategic deterrence; and (4) the civilizational mechanism, through the mobilization of the Second Step components. The activation of these four mechanisms ultimately generates measurable national power outcomes across economic, scientific, military, and cultural dimensions. It is suggested that the gradual buildup of this multifaceted power will establish the essential groundwork for bringing about the New Islamic Civilization. Therefore, the model posits a sequential causal chain: Islamic Lifestyle → Fertility Behavior → Four Causal Mechanisms → National Power → New Islamic Civilization.

1.4 The Four Causal Mechanisms: How Population Growth Drives National Power

Content analysis of the theoretical and empirical literature identified four causal mechanisms through which population growth affects national power. These mechanisms constitute the central theoretical contribution of the study.

1.4.1 Economic Mechanism: Labor Supply and Market Expansion

Demographic expansion strengthens national power by boosting the labor pool and growing the internal market. A bigger population offers a larger workforce, enhancing production levels and tax income. At the same time, an increased population expands the domestic market, driving consumption and investment. Research from 25 nations indicates that increasing fertility from 1.5 to 2.2 results in a 4–6% long-run increase in GDP (Bloom et al., 2019). Additionally, Lee and Mason (2010, pp. 179-207) found that a youthful workforce accounted for 25 to 40 percent of East Asia's economic growth during its demographic dividend. Regarding Iran, a growing, young workforce can fuel economic progress via higher production, consumption, and innovation. This process is supported by the Islamic way of life through timely marriage and family values, which foster a steady, driven workforce, as well as by raising virtuous children, which prioritizes education and skill acquisition.

1.4.2 Innovation Mechanism:_Youth, Creativity, and Knowledge Production

A young demographic promotes greater ingenuity, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement. Specifically, a high density of individuals aged 20-34 is linked to increased scientific output and per capita patent filings (Liang et al., 2020, pp. 67-92). Younger cohorts tend to embrace new technologies more readily, accept entrepreneurial risks more easily, and produce more original concepts. For Iran, this dynamic can drive greater scientific progress and knowledge creation, as seen in the rise of Iranian ISI publications during the 2010s. The Islamic way of life reinforces this process by emphasizing the upbringing of virtuous children through moral and professional guidance, while also fostering contentment and faith in God, which diminishes the dread of failure and promotes innovative risk-taking.

1.4.3 Security Mechanism: Demographic Foundations of Deterrence

A younger population provides the necessary manpower for military and security sectors, which in turn improves deterrence. Countries with a high proportion of youth can maintain larger standing armies and allocate more funding toward defense. According to Tammen et al. (2017, pp. 124-160), nations with younger demographics generally demonstrate greater defense expenditures and military strength. Historical examples, like the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988), known in Iran as the Sacred Defense, illustrate the importance of human capital, where a dedicated young populace was vital for the nation's survival. Iran's 14th place in the 2024 Global Firepower index (Global Firepower, 2024, p. 12) is partly a result of these demographic strengths. Additionally, Islamic lifestyle values support this through family-centric principles that create loyal, motivated citizens, paired with a shared identity (ummah consciousThe Lancet, the International Monetary Fund (IMF)ness) that enhances national toughness and the will to defend the country.

1.4.4 Civilizational Mechanism:_The Second Step's Driving Engine

The Statement of the Second Step (Khamenei, 2018) outlines civilization-building in seven headings: science, spirituality, economy, justice, independence, dignity, and lifestyle. In all seven, the "young generation" is the driving engine. As Waezi (2020, p. 56) explains, the Statement represents a paradigm shift from state-building to civilization-building. This research suggests that a young population offers: (a) the demographic scale necessary for civilizational endeavors, (b) the vitality required for prolonged civilizational efforts, and (c) the reproductive potential to maintain civilizational progress through successive generations. The Islamic lifestyle, through its seven components, creates the daily practices that embody civilizational values and prepares the younger generation for this civilizational mission.

1.5 Critical Dialogue: Addressing Counterarguments and Alternative Views

The relationship between population increase and national power has been questioned on several grounds. This section addresses the most common counterarguments.

Counterargument 1: "More population leads to more unemployment"

Response: Employment is a function of investment, not an inverse function of population. A youthful demographic boosts the drive for investment and generates job opportunities (Lee & Mason, 2010, p. 190). Iran's unemployment problem is structural—related to mismatches in education-labor markets and sanctions—not a

function of population size. Nations boasting greater population densities, such as South Korea and the Netherlands, exhibit lower levels of unemployment.

Counterargument 2: "Increasing population numbers cause environmental problems"

Response: Resource management is fundamentally different from population reduction. Countries with much higher population densities than Iran maintain good environmental indicators through intelligent management. According to World Bank (2023) data, the Netherlands (508 people/km²), Singapore (8,358 people/km²), and South Korea (527 people/km²) all have higher population densities than Iran (52 people/km²) yet have superior environmental outcomes. Preston et al. (2001, p. 256) emphasize that population-environment outcomes are mediated by technology, consumption patterns, and governance—not population size alone. The Islamic lifestyle promotes responsible stewardship (khalifat al-ard) rather than exploitative consumption.

Counterargument 3: "Islamic lifestyle is subjective and cannot be measured"

Response: The section on Operational Components (Table1) operationalizes Islamic lifestyle through seven measurable components with clear operational definitions and religious sources. As shown in current demographic studies regarding religious differences in fertility (Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2008, p. 71; Razavi, 2018, p. 89), these elements can be assessed using survey tools, such as Likert scales measuring agreement with claims like "Childbearing is a divine blessing."

Counterargument 4: "As evidenced by nations such as Japan and South Korea, economic growth by itself leads to lower fertility rates, independent of any religious or cultural regulations."

Response: This argument confuses correlation with causation. According to the European Fertility Project (2019), nations implementing robust family-support systems, such as Sweden and France, keep fertility rates above 1.8 despite advanced development, whereas countries with inadequate policies, including South Korea, Italy, and Japan, see rates drop below 1.3. The Islamic lifestyle framework addresses the values that secular policies cannot reach. Furthermore, the link between development and fertility is not one-way: Lee and Mason (2010) demonstrated that in certain instances, fertility rates drop before development occurs, while in others, they decline afterward. The Islamic model offers a third pathway: value-based fertility that does not require economic underdevelopment.

Counterargument 5: "Population growth will exacerbate water and food scarcity in Iran, which is already facing environmental stress"

Response: Madani (2014, pp. 315-328) and the World Bank (2023) suggest that Iran's water issues primarily arise from inefficient agricultural practices, including water subsidies and old irrigation techniques, instead of population increases. Iran's per capita water consumption is 2.5 times the global average (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2022). Achieving a 30 percent increase in efficiency might entirely fix the water scarcity. Additionally, Islamic principles promote moderation (i'tidal) and prohibit waste (israf), addressing the consumption side of environmental challenges. As Preston et al. (2001, p. 260) point out, governance and technology affect

the relationship between population and nature, not merely population numbers.

Counterargument 6: "The Supreme Leader's statements on population are political rhetoric, not scientific propositions"

Response: This study treats the Leader's statements as theoretical propositions to be tested against evidence, not as unquestionable axioms. The Second Step Statement explicitly invites scientific analysis: "This statement is a document that can be studied and analyzed" (Khamenei, 2018, p. 3). The present study tests the proposition "population increase contributes to national power" using demographic and economic evidence, independent of the Leader's authority. The findings support this proposition, but this support is based on evidence—not authority.

1.6 Research Limitations and Methodological Caveats

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the study is qualitative, using directed content analysis of texts (Leader's statements, Quran, Hadith, scholarly articles). Although this enables profound textual analysis, it precludes statistical generalization or causal inference from an econometric perspective. Causal language ("contributes to," "leads to") is used in the theoretical sense described in Section 2.4, not as a claim of statistical causality.

Second, the study relies on published demographic and economic data from international sources (UN, IMF, World Bank, Global Firepower) but does not conduct original quantitative analysis of Iranian microdata. The population projections are based on UN scenarios that may not account for unexpected events (wars, pandemics, technological breakthroughs, major policy changes).

Third, the operationalization of Islamic lifestyle components (Table 1) requires validation through survey research. The elements were extracted from religious scripture and the Leader's rhetoric rather than through empirical assessment of Iranian perspectives. This was beyond the scope of the present study and is a direction for future research.

Fourth, the study does not examine regional, gender, socioeconomic, or ethnic variations in fertility intentions within Iran. The Islamic lifestyle components may be interpreted differently across these groups, which would affect policy implementation.

Fifthly, this study fails to consider the potential trade-offs between increasing population size and female participation in the workforce and education—a central topic in demographic research (Bloom & Canning, 2006; Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2008) that requires separate investigation.

Sixth, the study's findings are specific to the Iranian context and the framework of Islamic lifestyle as articulated by the Supreme Leader. One should be careful when attempting to generalize these findings to other Muslim-majority nations that possess distinct religious and political settings.

1.7. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the limitations identified above, several directions for future research are suggested. First, quantitative survey research should be conducted to measure Iranian youth attitudes toward the seven Islamic lifestyle components and their correlation with fertility intentions. Second, cross-national panel data analysis comparing Muslim-majority countries with different demographic policies could isolate the effect of Islamic lifestyle variables. Third, system

dynamics modeling could simulate the effect of different population increase policies on GDP, security, and civilization-building outcomes through 2050. Fourth, examination of how the seven Islamic lifestyle components vary by gender, education, urban/rural residence, and Iranian province would inform targeted policy interventions. Fifth, quasi-experimental studies of specific policy instruments (e.g., marriage loans, housing support, child benefits) could determine which are most effective in promoting Islamic lifestyle components. This would provide evidence-based guidance for policy design.

1.8 Summary of Findings

This research has analyzed how population increase based on Islamic lifestyle contributes to Iran's national power and the realization of the New Islamic Civilization. The findings provide support for the Supreme Leader's proposition regarding the relationship between population and national power as articulated in the Second Step Statement (2018) and General Population Policies (2014). Four causal mechanisms were identified: economic, innovation, security, and civilizational. The Islamic lifestyle, operationalized through seven components (timely marriage, ease of marriage, childbearing as blessing, family-centeredness, raising righteous children, contentment, and trust in God), activates all four mechanisms.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Summary of Arguments

By referencing the Holy Quran, Islamic traditions, and scientific data, alongside the Supreme Leader's formal pronouncements—specifically the 2018 Second Step Statement of the Revolution, the 2014 General Population Policies, and various 2015 speeches—this study demonstrates that a strong direct link exists between population growth driven by an Islamic way of life and the ongoing power and advancement of Iran. The Islamic lifestyle, by promoting easy marriage, family-centeredness, contentment, trust in God, and childbearing, both increases population quantity and improves human capital quality through raising a righteous generation.

The theoretical contributions of this article are threefold:

First, the operationalization of Islamic lifestyle as seven measurable components moves beyond vague references to "Islamic values" in previous literature.

Second, the specification of four causal mechanisms (economic, innovation, security, civilizational) opens the "black box" that previous research left unopened.

Furthermore, combining religious scriptures (Quran, Hadith) with modern empirical sources (The Lancet, IMF, Global Firepower, and UN data) shows that Islamic doctrines and current social sciences can support one another rather than conflict.

2.2 Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study confirm and extend previous research in several ways:

First, consistent with Bostan (2020, p. 89), the analysis confirms that the population issue in the Leader's thought is strategic, not secondary. Nevertheless, this research expands upon Bostan’s findings by (a) operationalizing the Islamic lifestyle framework found in the Leader's remarks, (b) identifying four specific causal mechanisms instead of just stating a broad connection, and (c) offering empirical support drawn from economic and demographic literature.

Second, the findings align with Waezi's (2020, p. 52) civilizational framing of the Second Step Statement. Nevertheless, this research goes further than Waezi's examination by (a) suggesting that population growth may actually drive civilizational advancement instead of just being a byproduct of it, (b) connecting this civilizational process to particular demographic results (such as labor supply, military strength, and knowledge creation), and (c) using the Islamic way of life as the micro-level basis for macro-level civilizational effects. Waezi's civilizational framework remains an essential contribution.

Thirdly, although descriptive research like Mirzaei (2021) and Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald (2008) recorded the drop in Iran's fertility and its regional differences, this research enhances their findings with a normative and causal perspective: moving beyond simply noting the decline to explaining why it endangers national strength and how an Islamic way of life might counteract it.

2.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest that demography is not merely a background variable for national power but a causal driver. This supports power transition theory (Organski, 1958; Kugler & Tammen, 2012) while adding an Islamic dimension that the original theory lacked. Specifically, the Islamic lifestyle framework suggests that the quality of population (faith, values, family orientation) matters as much as the quantity—a dimension absent from secular demographic literature.

2.4 Empirical Basis of Causal Claims

The causal claims presented in this study are supported by three forms of empirical evidence: (a) cross-national panel data from Lee and Mason (2010) and Bloom et al. (2019), (b) IMF (2023) and UN (2024) country-level data concerning Iran, and (c) a qualitative textual analysis of official statements from the Leader. However, the following should be clearly stated:

First, the study does not conduct original econometric analysis of Iranian data. The causal claims are based on the application of established demographic-economic models to Iran's context.

Second, the four mechanisms are identified through qualitative content analysis of texts, not through statistical mediation analysis.

Third, the size of the impacts (such as growth in GDP per capita) stems from global studies and is applied to Iran under the premise of comparable structural conditions—a supposition that necessitates verification in subsequent studies.

Fourth, the study does not claim that population increase guarantees national power; rather, it claims that population increase is a necessary but insufficient condition that must be combined with appropriate policies.

Definition: In this research, "causal mechanism" denotes theoretically suggested processes identified through qualitative content analysis and substantiated by empirical findings from economic and demographic studies. While the study identifies these mechanisms and provides supporting evidence from cross-national studies, it does not conduct original econometric testing of these causal

relationships in the Iranian context. The causal claims should therefore be understood as theoretical propositions requiring further empirical validation through quantitative research designs.

2.5 Policy Implications

Unless population growth strategies aligned with Islamic values are rigorously implemented and Iran's fertility rate remains at 1.6, UN medium-variant projections (UN, 2024, p. 89) suggest that the country's population will reach only 85 million by 2051 due to slowed growth. Furthermore, by 2061, the population is expected to decline to 78 million, with senior citizens (65+) making up more than 25 percent of the total. As cautioned by Zanjani (2017, p. 45) and Hosseini (2015, p. 8), this aging population will significantly impact Iran's economy (shrinking labor force, rising medical expenses), healthcare sector (the weight of elderly care), and national security (a smaller pool for military recruitment). The national power rank would fall from from 14th to 22nd–25th under this demographic scenario (Global Firepower, 2024, p. 12; Institute for Security Studies, 2023, p. 50).

On the other hand, an effective population policy rooted in Islamic living—by encouraging the seven elements listed in Table 1—might trigger all four causal mechanisms, establishing Iran as a dominant force within the New Islamic Civilization (Khamenei, 2018, p. 34; Waezi, 2020, p. 67).

The following policies are suggested: (a) encouraging prompt and accessible marriage via financial aids; (b) incorporating Islamic lifestyle elements into school programs; (c) offering thorough childcare assistance for new families; (d) initiating nationwide media drives highlighting childbirth as a divine blessing; and (e) creating family counseling hubs that advocate for the seven Islamic lifestyle components.

2.6 Distinction Between Religious, Policy, and Scientific Arguments

This study has employed three distinct modes of argumentation, and it is important to clarify their respective status:

Religious Arguments(Quran, Hadith): Utilizing the Holy Quran (e.g., 18:46, 6:151, 3:104) and Prophetic traditions (e.g., "The best of my Ummah are those with the most children"), the research demonstrates that procreation and population growth are divinely sanctioned. These are normative and theological claims grounded in Islamic revelation. In this study, religious texts are used to identify and interpret the components of Islamic lifestyle. They do not serve as empirical evidence, and the empirical claims examined here are tested only against independent data.

Policy Arguments: The study references the Supreme Leader's General Population Policies (2014) and Second Step Statement (2018) as binding policy documents for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Scientific Arguments: To examine whether population growth enhances national power, the research utilizes demographic statistics (UN, 2024), economic modeling (Bloom et al., 2019; Lee & Mason, 2010), military strength indices (Global Firepower, 2024), and studies on innovation (Liang et al., 2020). These arguments constitute empirically falsifiable propositions: each can be tested against observable data and rejected if the evidence does not support it.

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Authors' Contributions
In the present study, the author was responsible for developing the research design, collecting, analyzing, and interpretng the findings, drafting the article, and preparing and finalizing the revisions. The conclusions drawn from the findings, as well as their elaboration and interpretation, were developed by the author.

Conflict of Interest
The author of this article declares no conflict of interest.

Negative AI Statement
The author(s) declares that no AI tools or services were used in the preparation of this work replacement level.

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