

Chapter VII

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, Program Implications and Recommendation

This final chapter synthesizes the significant findings that have been discussed and analyzed in the two preceding chapters which respond to the theoretical perspectives, questions, objectives and hypotheses raised in the present study. For a clear and orderly presentation of the major study findings, conclusions, program implications and recommendations, the areas of concern in this undertaking are divided into three main parts:

- 1) Doctrinal inputs to government fertility control policies;
- 2) Religious beliefs and family planning behavior; and
- 3) Fertility control policies and family planning behavior.

A. DOCTRINAL INPUTS TO FERTILITY CONTROL POLICIES

One of the important questions that the present study tries to answer is the assertion that Islamic doctrines on fertility directly influence existing government fertility control policies. In this connection, the study resorts to a content analysis of certain government fertility control policies to ascertain whether or not they have considered the Islamic position on family planning.

This question is significant in the light of the widely held allegation among the Muslim Filipinos that the government did not consider the religious beliefs of the Muslims in the formulation of fertility control policies, because of religious differences and the Muslim minority status. Hence, the widespread resistance to government population control program by the target Muslim population, a response that has become a major policy problem.

However, from the contextual point of view, a brief glance at our Philippine population policy as a whole shows that it is democratic, voluntary, and non-coercive. More specifically, it is a national family planning program which respects the religious beliefs of the target individuals. The State, in its family planning policy, recognizes the right of the couples to choose their own method of contraception, according to their moral convictions and religious beliefs and to decide the number of children that they wish to have, under certain conditions of support and family well-being.

At a theoretical level, the general population policy of the government appears to be consistent with the Islamic teaching that approves family planning and allows temporary measures to space or limit the number of children. It is also in agreement with the Islamic prohibition against laws that coerce individuals or families concerned to adopt family planning, regardless of intentions.

In practice, however, the consideration of cultural and religious beliefs in the formulation and implementation of fertility control policies is not strictly adhered to. A closer look into certain specific fertility control policies of the government point to certain disagreements between Islamic doctrines on family planning and the family planning program as a whole, as in the case of free sterilization for GSIS and SSS members. It should be noted that while Islam allows the *azl* or withdrawal method, and other related methods like pills, condoms, and rhythm, sterilization and abortion after the quickening of the embryo are strictly prohibited by all Muslim jurists and theologians, except when the life of the mother is at stake.

On a broader level, the controversy regarding Islam and family planning in the Philippines revolves around the question that family planning is a behavioral problem. The decision of couples whether to adopt or oppose family planning is influenced by socio-psychological, economic, emotional, and ethical-moral factors. For the Muslim Filipinos, in particular, Islam is "a way of life" which simply means that it influences whatever decision a Muslim has to make, like the one on family planning. They are rigidly brought up in the tradition of Muslim religious values and

norms; hence, the decision of Muslim couples whether to limit their number of children or not is greatly influenced by their religion.

Meanwhile, the government introduces a technological intervention in this behavioral problem in the form of contraceptive technology. Although the program claims to be voluntary and non-coercive in the implementation of its contraceptive technology, the artificial methods being offered like sterilization and IUD are intrusive methods which are inimical to the religio-moral values of the general Muslim population.

More particularly, the program points to the inclusion by the state of cultural and religio-moral norms and values in the formulation and implementation of fertility control policies but only in relation to the Catholic Church. So far, it is only the Catholic religion which has been seriously consulted by the population policymaking. If the language of the government population policy in general reflects in part the Islamic position and teachings on family planning, this is pure coincidence since, in terms of religious doctrines on fertility, the Catholic and Muslim groups have more similarities than differences. For instance, both religions allow natural methods of contraception like rhythm and withdrawal, but prohibit abortion and sterilization except when the life of the mother is endangered.

It can be inferred from the above, that the government population policymakers set aside the important role of Islam (particularized theology perspective) in the program because it is a minority religion. It is noted here that Catholicism is the religion of four-fifths of the country's total population. As the particularized theology perspective asserts, religion in this case becomes a major hindrance toward the attainment of the goals of the program.

This action of the government population policymakers also reinforces the strong minority consciousness of the Muslim Filipinos (minority group status perspective), which is also viewed in the demographic literature as a contributory factor to high fertility of the target population concerned. Likewise, it questions the sincerity of the government in integrating the Muslims into

the mainstream of the Philippine society. Briefly then, the persisting controversy between Islam and family planning in the Philippines arises from the contraceptive methods being utilized and the lack of coordination and consultation between the target Muslim population and the population policymakers and implementors. Islam allows all methods related to withdrawal (*azl*), but forbids abortion and sterilization. According to Imam Iljas Ismail's interpretation of the true Islamic position, as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions, family planning is permissible in Islam because there is no explicit verse in the Holy Qur'an that either sanctions or prohibits it.

On the other hand, the government permits the use of all methods except abortion, but it still adopts the "cafeteria" approach in which the couple can freely select their own methods of contraception.

In response to the above controversy between Islam and family planning in the Philippines, the study suggests that:

1. *The family planning program through the Commission on Population should establish strong linkage with the Islamic groups in the Philippines, more particularly the Muslim theologians, scholars, "ulamas," "alims" and other religious leaders, as well as the traditional leaders, by establishing and activating institutional arrangements wherein consultation and dialogue on the religious issue in family planning can be undertaken so that religious inputs to policymaking and implementation can be realized.*

This recommendation is premised on the observation that no particular policy or program of the government such as family planning will be successful in the Muslim areas without emphasizing its religious implications. Although majority of the

Filipinos are Catholics, government policy must also respect the conscience of the minorities, specifically, the Muslims in the Philippines. In other words, any program that seriously affects the socio-economic-political affairs of the Muslim Filipinos should not overlook the religious inputs to such program as family planning since, for the Muslim-targets, everything must be done in conformity with the Islamic law. It is also based on the present study findings which show that religion has a significant influence on the family planning behavior of the respondents.

Among other things, a frank and open dialogue on family planning can be undertaken to renew Islamic conservative outlook on family planning in the Philippines and possibly obviate a "conspiracy of silence" which will not only be inimical to the success of the family planning program but also to both Islam and the country. In addition, the government can consult Muslim theologians and *ulamas* and other respectable religious leaders in order that the sentiments of the majority of the Muslims regarding family planning may be considered in the formulation and implementation of related policies. Under this scheme, conflicts arising from the recognition of two different legal systems (modern vs. *adat* or *Shari'ah* or Islamic law) can be avoided. The same program of action is expected to ease the herculean task of making the program acceptable to the Muslim Filipinos.

More specifically, it is timely for the program to initiate the holding of dialogues with Islamic scholars and theologians in the Philippines on the religious issues involved in family planning since the conditions in the Muslim world in general are favorable to doing so. One such international conference on Islam and family planning was held in Rabat, Morocco in December 1971 where the participants unanimously agreed that family planning is permissible in Islam.

In the case of the Muslim Filipinos, it is opportune for the program to take a proactive role toward consultation and dialogue with Muslim theologians and other religious leaders, since the government is now gradually implementing the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines" through the creation of the

Shari'ah Courts and the recent appointment of Muslim judges to these courts. In this connection, the study also recommends:

2. *To include the doctrinal position of Islam on family planning in the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines" after a thorough deliberations have been made on the subject by Muslim Filipino theologians, "ulamas" and other religious leaders in consultation with foreign Muslim authorities and in coordination with Congress, Supreme Court, Department of Justice, and Commission on Population.*

In many Muslim countries today, family planning is already an integral part of the national development plans. The action has not met resistance from the religious sector; hence, the gradual acceptance of family planning as part of the Islamic way of life. In the Philippines, since the Muslim Code is still at its initial phase of implementation, the incorporation of family planning can be lobbied in Congress. This legislative action can minimize the resistance encountered in disseminating and promoting family planning information and services in the Muslim areas.

From the religious point of view, the incorporation of the true Islamic position on family planning in the Muslim Code can shed some light on the existing controversy. At present, there is a cloud of doubt as to the true stand of Islam on family planning. According to the respondents' perception, Islam is totally opposed to any form of family planning.

Family planning is a sensitive issue as it is open to various interpretations, including distorted ones made by local *ulamas* who have not done any extensive research on the subject. While the absence of a religious hierarchy (e.g., Catholic religion) in Islam is conducive to liberal interpretations of the Islamic position on family planning as laid down in the various sources

of Muslim laws, there is also the danger that such interpretations may be strongly influenced by non-Islamic elements, such as the love for a big clan or family. In short, the opposition of Muslim Filipinos to family planning is based on "folk" religious beliefs which they perceive to be synonymous with the true doctrinal stand of Islam on family planning.

B. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND FAMILY PLANNING BEHAVIOR

Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Religious Doctrines

The doctrinal teachings of Islam related to fertility are generally well known to the respondents except the doctrines directly related to family planning. The doctrines related to marriage but indirectly related to fertility are very well known to the respondents because of their rigid religious training and education in the Madrasah schools, not to mention other sources of religious information like Friday congregations. In fact, the data show that about one-half of the total respondents attended Madrasah schools.

On the other hand, only less than one-fourth of the total sample know the doctrines directly related to family planning (*doctrines on family planning and on contraception*) except the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization* because of the recency of family planning, both as a program of the government and as a religious issue in Islamic scholarship and research. In the Philippines, there has been no serious discussion on the relationship between Islam and family planning, hence, the belief that Islam is against family planning is still prevalent especially in the rural Muslim areas. With regard to their perception of family planning, it is "folk" religion that is being adopted in practice, and not the classical Islam as truly found in the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions. Thus, majority of the Muslims do not know that Islam by doctrine allows family planning and the use of contraceptive methods except abortion and sterilization.

The *doctrine on abortion and sterilization* is well known to the respondents because abortion and sterilization as methods of contraception are equated with "infanticide," an act explicitly punishable in the Holy Qur'an.

Since the Madrasah schools play an essential role in the religious indoctrination, training, and education of the Muslims and are presently being integrated into the national educational system with their own separate curricula, the study also recommends:

3. *To include population education in the curricula of the Madrasah schools, where the true stand or doctrinal position of Islam on family planning, as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions, may be taught and in the hope that this effort can make the family planning program become more acceptable to Islam.*

The teaching of population education in the Madrasah schools is a supplementary measure to the proposed inclusion of family planning in the Muslim Code. With the formal integration of family planning into the Madrasah curricula, the government can use the Madrasah as an effective instrument in increasing the Muslims' level of awareness on family planning and its specific components. It will also correct their misconception as to the true position of Islam on family planning, since the latter is already a part of classroom discussion.

More significantly, through the Madrasahs, the target Muslim population is expected to learn that artificial contraceptive methods, except abortion and sterilization, are generally allowed by Islam, thus, minimizing their objection to contraceptive technology. For the sterilization method, in particular, the Madrasah could help to explain the relevance of this method to family welfare and responsible parenthood. The essential point is to impress on the Muslims that effective methods

of contraception like sterilization may be justifiable for several reasons which do not necessarily involved the life of the mother.

Furthermore, with regard to the *doctrine on value of children*, the Prophetic Tradition which emphasizes quality rather than quantity of children should be made known to the target population, thus correcting their wrong understanding of the *doctrine on value of children* as to allow unlimited procreation.

In Islam, when the number of children has adverse effects upon either parent or becomes a source of mounting difficulties and miseries in their lives, proper intervention is allowed. Islam allows the stopping of the birth of a child or of many children in any allowable way possible, such as the adoption of family planning, which will have to correspond necessarily with the economic, social, and political context of the situation.

It can be generally hypothesized that unless the above program recommendations are done, it may be difficult to establish a favorable situation in which the government can positively influence the family planning behavior of the Muslims Filipinos. Obviously, the target Muslim population has to be fully indoctrinated on the true position of Islam on family planning, especially the Islamic doctrine on contraception. As shown by the data, the respondents' low level of knowledge of the said doctrines has a significant influence on their attitudes and perceived behavior.

In other words, the first fundamental task that confronts the government vis-a-vis the family planning program in Muslim Mindanao is how to convince the target Muslim population that family planning is doctrinally acceptable in Islam, that Prophet Muhammad had allowed it, and that the adoption of contraceptive methods, in particular, is intended for the Muslims' interest and benefit and not to reduce their number or to gradually eliminate them through a well-planned "genocidal" policy. Toward this end, it is interesting to note that it is not difficult to positively influence the attitude of the Muslim Filipinos on certain vital issues as long as they are fully convinced that it is allowed by Islam. It is at this point that the Madrasahs and the Muslim theologians and *ulamas* will play very critical roles.

However, any attempt to integrate population education into the curricula of the Madrasah schools must first obtain the approval of Muslim theologians and *ulamas*. This may suggest also that the nature of population education to be taught in the Madrasahs must be decided first at the religious level in coordination with the Department of Education, Culture and Sports.

The study findings also reveal that majority of the respondents who know the doctrines related to fertility strongly agree with the same doctrines except the *doctrine on contraception* in which fair agreement is observed. This can be accounted for by their negative attitude toward artificial contraceptive methods.

In spite of the respondents' high level of knowledge and agreement with most of the doctrines related to fertility, the fact remains that most of these doctrines are pro-natalist in contents; hence, they have high fertility effects. Consequently, many respondents engender pronatalist outlook such as that every Muslim must marry, or must remain celibate (temporarily) only when he is very poor; or that the main purpose of marriage is to have children.

While the *doctrines on family planning and on contraception* are not as pro-natalist as the other doctrines related to marriage, they permit the use of such methods as pills, condoms, withdrawal and rhythm, but not the more effective methods of contraception like sterilization, except in emergency cases. It appears that in Islam the generally accepted method of contraception is the natural method, which is less effective scientifically in controlling pregnancy.

Since it is unrealistic for the government to abandon its contraceptive bias due to the huge resources already poured into the program and the facilities in place for this kind of service delivery, and since it could not convince the Muslims, especially the theologians and *ulamas*, to redirect the pronatalist contents of the Islamic doctrines in support of family planning, the study suggests:

4. *To give equal thrust to artificial contraceptives and natural family planning methods or practices to neutralize the pro-natalist influence of religious beliefs/values of the Muslims as evoked by religious doctrines.*

Various Filipino fertility studies have shown that the shift from artificial methods to less effective methods, e.g., rhythm, and the increasing percentage of "dropouts" from the program can be partly explained by the harmful effects of the artificial methods used to the health of the contraceptive users. In addition to this problem, the experience of the national family planning program shows that religious groups consider the adoption of family planning in order to achieve family welfare and responsible parenthood. Thus, to reconcile the requirements of the Philippine family planning program and responsible parenthood, various religious groups like the Muslims have opted for the safe and moralistic methods of contraception such as withdrawal and rhythm.

Along this line, the contraceptive thrust of the program is not readily acceptable to the target Muslim population since the necessary condition (e.g., life of the mother is at stake), which would justify the adoption of tubal ligation, does not exist for most of the target population. For the Muslim, in general, artificial contraceptive methods are a bad experience which produce side effects like body discomforts, bleeding, and even death; hence, they are inimical to family welfare and responsible parenthood. Islamic doctrine provides that the means chosen, where several are possible, must have the least negative and harmful effect.

This is to suggest that contraceptive methods which are doctrinally opposed to the Islam religion, such as sterilization, must not be given important attention by the program because it will just evoke suspicion that the government is doing all means, moral or immoral, to reduce the number of Muslims in the Philippines. In such a situation, the target Muslim population become more conscious of their being a separate religious and

minority group (particularized and minority group status perspectives). As expected, their tendency is to multiply their numbers as a countermeasure to their perception of the program as an ungodly strategy to keep them in their minority position.

Thus, it is proposed that the program should not overemphasize contraceptive technology; it should also stress on its natural family planning thrust which is more acceptable to the target Muslim population. This means that the program will use a two-pronged strategy to achieve its objectives more effectively and efficiently. Such recommended change in the program thrust and strategy would be more indigenous and, therefore, more consistent with the cultural and religious beliefs of the Muslims. It is also more economically efficient for the program since the expenditures allocated for contraceptives that are imported from abroad would be considerably reduced. This change will make the program more self-reliant because its operation will be emancipated from foreign control and inputs, and it will rely more on native will and resources. With a self-reliant and independent family planning program, strong linkages in terms of program coordination can be established with the various Muslim communities which are now neglected in policy formulation and implementation, but which could be of great help to the program, especially in conducting research on indigenous natural family planning methods acceptable and readily available to the population. Toward this end, the study recommends the following:

5. *To conduct intensive research on indigenous natural family planning methods and practices in the Muslim communities in consultation with local "herbolarios" or healers as well as religious leaders.*

The positive utilization of indigenous methods, beliefs, and practices for innovation purposes, more particularly for family planning cannot be taken for granted, if sustained change is to be achieved. It is about time that population policymakers and program managers do away with stereotypes about rural lifeways or with the belief that traditional practices are inimical to scientific thinking or technique, e.g., contraceptive use.

Filipino "folk" practices and medicines related to family planning are generally found in the different cultural groups in the Philippines. They include breast-feeding, displacement of the mother's womb, herbal drinks, lactation, and the like. The mechanics of these indigenous practices and medicines are not popularly known outside of the rural communities or tribal groups that adopt them. For instance, among the Tausug Muslims, the mother, after delivery, is made to drink a tasteless tea-like liquid made from boiled "sibukaw" bark which is believed to give to the mother a longer period of rest from pregnancy. In short, the period of pregnancy would be at longer intervals, a sort of normal spacing for the mother. In other countries like Papua New Guinea, there is a contraceptive practice in which the couple take separate communal homes after delivery and then live only under one ceiling after their child has reached the age of 5 to 7 years.

In addition, research studies should be undertaken to discover other similar "folk" practices in the Muslim areas, considering that the rural Muslims are still very traditional and superstitious with regard to child bearing and pregnancy. These traditional medical beliefs and practices still continue in the remote areas where the people are out of reach of modern facilities and personnel. This recommendation will supplement the POPCOM research undertaking on natural family planning which includes, among other things, the participation of the religious groups "through the training of volunteer workers of community-based organization, particularly the religious leaders" to ease the work of the regular program workers.

The recent program emphasis on natural family planning methods is triggered by the general acceptance of rhythm and the low degree of knowledge about it. Rhythm is one of the least effective methods of contraception, hence, the need for a continuous search of alternative natural methods which are comparatively more effective. The Filipino "folk" practices like those found among the Tausug Muslims will be more amenable to the target Muslim population, since they conform to the cultural realities of the Muslim communities concerned.

Perceived Influence of Religious Beliefs

The study hypothesis which states that among those who know and agree with the *doctrines on value of children* or on *abortion and sterilization*, there would be significantly more respondents who perceive influence on their behavior than those who do not perceive any influence is not confirmed by the data. However, the alternative hypothesis is sustained by the study findings for the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization*. This means to say that among those who know and agree with the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization*, more respondents perceive certain doctrinal influences.

It is worthwhile mentioning that both the *doctrines on value of children* and on *abortion and sterilization* are pro-natalist in direction and content; thus, their influence on the perceived behavior of the respondents seem to be negative to the program. The *doctrine on value of children* encourages unlimited procreation as the basic purpose of marriage. Similarly, the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization* allows sterilization only when the life of the mother is endangered.

Needless to state, the prohibition on the adoption of abortion and sterilization as methods of contraception does not work for the interest of the population program because these effective methods as reflected by the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization* are not going to be used by the Muslim Filipinos if they have to follow the same doctrine. Besides, the government cannot change the direction of the doctrines in support of family planning. At best, it can initiate certain policy actions that can neutralize the pro-natalist effects of these doctrines on the target population without necessarily antagonizing their religious contents, such as program consultation with religious leaders, incorporation of population education in the Madrasah schools, and others.

The data also indicate that among the respondents who know and agree with the doctrines, *child spacing* and *limiting number of children* are the most influenced aspects of behavior, while *contraceptive use* is the least influenced aspect. This finding implies a certain discrepancy in the conceptual definition

of family planning between the government and the respondents. While the government conceptualizes family planning in terms of *contraceptive use*, the respondents interpreted the program more in terms of *limiting number of children* and *child spacing*. As shown by the data, the behavior of the respondents is consistent with their religious beliefs which are generally anticontraceptive, and compatible with their perception of family planning as a means of attaining family welfare and responsible parenthood.

With regard to the more significant number of respondents who claim no influence on their behavior, the study has argued that the respondents made that response in compliance with the Islamic doctrinal contents which seem to have forbidden its adherents to adopt any form of family planning, especially contraceptive use.

Similarly, a higher percentage of the respondents have no adequate knowledge and understanding of the family planning program of the government, more particularly the four major aspects of behavior which they were asked to identify as having been influenced by the doctrines. This problem may be caused by the failure and weaknesses of the IEC campaigns being launched in the Muslim areas not to mention the recency of the program in the same areas. For these reasons, the respondents are expected to find difficulties in relating the doctrines to their perceived aspects of behavior that were influenced by similar doctrines.

In this connection, Recommendation 2 and 3 which call for the participation of the religious sector in the dissemination of the true Islamic position on family planning and the incorporation of population education into the curricula of the Madrasahs are relevant at this point.

Influence of Selected Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables

The study hypothesis which says that among those who know and agree with the *doctrines on value of children* or on *abortion and sterilization*, the *urban* respondents or those with *higher* education tend to perceive the influence of the doctrines on their behavior more than the *rural* respondents or those with

lower education is generally confirmed by the data. On the other hand, the other related hypothesis which states that respondents who are *currently working* or those with *higher incomes* tend to perceive the doctrinal influence on their behavior more than those who are *not currently working* or those with *lower incomes* is rejected by the data. In short, the variables *education* and *place of residence* have significant influence on perceived behavior while the other variables of *currently working* and *total annual income* have no significant influence on perceived behavior.

In brief, the data have partly confirmed the social characteristics perspective which provides that the fertility attitude and behavior of the population are influenced by their socio-economic background. As the data indicate, the socio-economic background of the respondents reinforces the strong influence of religion on their fertility behavior or attitudes which is generally negative to the program.

On the basis of the above stated findings, the study suggests:

6. *For the government to encourage more economic progress in the rural areas as a precondition for urbanization, as well as to establish more educational institutions that are consistent with Muslims feelings and needs.*

More appropriately, it can be suggested that certain development in Muslim Mindanao, especially in the areas of education and rural development, should be strengthened so as to gradually shift the behavioral actions of the Muslims from strong resistance to mild acceptance of family planning. Various studies on fertility have shown, for instance, that increase in educational attainment among Muslims Filipinos represent one of the major ways in which a Philippine population policy can encourage fertility limitation. Likewise, urbanization of the rural areas would provide greater access for Muslim women to mass media and to new ideas and influences like that of family planning information and services.

The government should also establish more educational institutions consistent with the cultural beliefs of the people.

What is needed is an educational system which does not cater solely to the moral biases of a single cultural or religious group (e.g., Christians) but one which also recognizes the culture of the Muslim Filipinos. Besides, the rapid increase in the levels of education and literacy among Muslim women, young girls in particular, is a crucial factor in the women's acceptance and favorable attitude toward family planning or in fertility decline. For this reason, in addition to formal training, functional literacy program should be strengthened. The integration of the Madrasah schools into the educational system is another healthy step toward this direction.

Influence of Minority Group Status

The general study hypothesis which states that among those who know and agree with the *doctrines on value of children* or on *abortion and sterilization*, those who agree with the statements that "Christians and Muslims are treated equally" by the government, that "Christians and Muslims are equally benefitted by the government projects in Mindanao," and that "the government has no *genocidal* policy against the Muslims" tend to perceive the doctrinal influence on their family planning behavior more than those who disagree with the statements is rejected by the study findings. This fact suggests that agreement or disagreement with the foregoing statements used in measuring the respondents' minority consciousness does not significantly influence the relation between religious beliefs and perceived family planning behavior.

Unfortunately, the specific data linking minority status or consciousness to family planning behavior are not borne out by the study and, therefore, no plausible conclusions can be made. While the study findings reject any significant influence of minority group status on the nature of relationship between religious doctrines and perceived family planning behavior, we cannot totally dismiss the importance of the minority group status factor as a determinant of Muslim fertility behavior. In fact, minority consciousness appears to be a common characteristic found among Muslims worldwide, irrespective of whether they belong to the majority or minority groups. Since almost all Muslim

populations define themselves as members of a minority group, i.e., the Muslim *ummah* in a non-Muslim world, this might explain why, even though the Catholic pro-natalist doctrine, for instance, is so much more explicit than the Muslim doctrine, Muslims generally have high fertility while Catholics have not.

In other words, the study findings fail to support the *minority group status perspective* which asserts that minority consciousness has a negative influence on family planning behavior by encouraging high natality rate, especially under the condition of discrimination and insecurity. In spite of this finding, it may be hypothesized that the influence of minority consciousness in the present study may be reflected by the very strong influence of the *particularized theology perspective*. Hence, a combined effect of these two perspectives on the family planning behavior of the respondents can still be inferred from this study if we agree with the observation that minority consciousness is a part of Islamic consciousness, even if minority consciousness *per se* is found to have no influence on respondents' perceived behavior.

Faced with this kind of finding, the best that the government can do to influence the family planning behavior of the Muslim Filipinos in general, and the Maranao Muslims in particular, is to implement Recommendation 6 which concerns the socio-economic development of the Muslim communities in the Philippines. This recommendation is based on the assumption that the kind of natalist attitudes and practices the minority factor leads to is likely to depend in part on the general socio-economic position of the groups concerned, as well as on such factors as the desire of the group for assimilation.

Agreement or disagreement with these minority-related statements does not also significantly influence the relation between religious beliefs and the individual aspect of behavior mentioned by the respondents. The most influenced aspects of behavior are *limiting number of children* and *child spacing* while *contraceptive use* is the one least influenced. Again, this particular finding confirms the anti-artificial contraceptive attitude of the respondents and their distinct understanding and interpretation of the program.

C. FERTILITY CONTROL POLICIES AND FAMILY PLANNING BEHAVIOR

Knowledge of and Attitudes Toward Policies

As a whole, only the constitutional population policies and those directly related to family planning are known to about one-half of the total respondents. On the other hand, the labor and educational policies with fertility limitation contents are poorly known to the respondents. The latter finding can be significantly attributed to the fact that only 58 respondents are currently employed, hence, only this minority group can be expected to know the labor policies, like those on maternity benefits and free sterilization. Furthermore, less than one-half of the total sample are elementary school graduates and over, thus, very few are expected to be knowledgeable about the educational policies with fertility control contents. Besides, those who stopped their formal schooling before the implementation of these policies during the inception of Martial Law can be expected also to be ignorant of the same. Further, those who were formally educated through the Madrasah schools are also unaware of these educational policies because population education is not a part of the Madrasah curricula. Recommendation 3 which proposes the inclusion of population education in the Madrasah curricula is one of the alternative solutions to this problem.

In terms of respondents' attitudes toward the policies (of those who know the policies), the data generally disclose a higher percentage of disagreement with most of the policies under study except the *constitutional population policies* and the *policy on contraception*. Negative attitude is more significantly pronounced among policies with fertility control contents. On the other hand, the *policy on the inclusion of cultural value inputs*, which has no clear fertility control content or none at all, has obtained the highest percentage of agreement.

Based on the study findings on the respondents' level of knowledge and agreement with the policies, population policymakers and program managers have to critically review and reassess the IEC campaigns in the Muslim areas in terms of their

strengths and weaknesses. In line with this argument, the study proposes:

7. *To launch information campaign (IEC) tailored to the cultural and religious beliefs and norms of the Muslim Filipinos to raise their level of knowledge of policies in order to enhanced positive attitude and acceptance of family planning.*

Obviously, if the public policies are intended to influence the family planning behavior and attitudes of its target population, then the existing fertility control policies should be made known to all possible audiences by using the most practical and acceptable communication methods. For the target Muslim population, experience shows that the IEC campaigns being launched in the Muslim areas have not been successful in disseminating family planning-related information and services. It is a sad commentary that one of the primary reasons why the IEC government-supported campaigns in the Muslim communities has failed is that it is alienated from the cultural context of the target population. For instance, brochures and handouts with illustrated examples (pictures) showing the procedures of using certain contraceptive methods hurt the sensibilities of the Muslims, especially if private organs are indicated. It is diametrically opposed to the religious belief and practice of the Muslims in which women are even required to wear veils to conceal their faces. In short, to many conservative Muslims, the showing of private organs even only in pictures for purposes of population education and family planning information and services is considered "obscene" or "taboo."

From the above, it may be drawn that what is needed is an IEC campaign strategy which cater solely to the moral and cultural values of the target Muslim population. It is therefore recommended that the government should implement in the Muslim areas a Muslim-tailored IEC which closely coordinates with Muslim religious leaders, giving special emphasis on the dissemination of policy information and family planning services which are less offensive to the cultural and religious biases of the

people, e.g., natural and traditional methods in the place of artificial contraceptive methods.

This recommendation suggests that the government separates the family planning requirements of the Muslims, as in the area of *population policy awareness* and *contraceptive use*, although the national planners still have to take an aggregate view of the program. Only by understanding the Muslim cultural context can population policymakers hope to influence positively the Muslims' attitudes and behavior related to family planning, especially when a single government population policy is applied throughout the nation.

Perceived Influence of Policies on Family Planning Behavior

The hypothesis of the study which asserts that among those who know and agree with the *policies on the inclusion of cultural value inputs* or the *regulation of population levels* or on *contraception* there would be significantly more respondents who perceive certain influences on their behavior than those who do not perceive any is generally confirmed by the data for the policies on the *regulation of population levels* and on *contraception*, but not for the *policy on the inclusion of cultural value inputs*. For the latter policy, the data have instead confirmed the alternative hypothesis in which more respondents do not perceive the policy influence on their behavior than those who perceive certain influences.

The data also reveal that the *policy on contraception*, which has the clearest fertility control content of the three policies under study has a comparatively more significant influence on perceived behavior than the other two policies with no clear fertility control contents. On the other hand, the *policy on the inclusion of cultural value inputs* which is neither pro-natalist nor anti-natalist in content is the least influential of the policies under examination.

The most influenced aspects of behavior are *limiting number of children* and *child spacing*, while *delayed marriage* and *contraceptive use*, in that order, are the least influenced

aspects. As previously mentioned, this general finding can be accounted for by the contrasting conceptualization and understanding of family planning between the respondents and the government.

Influence of Selected Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables

The data do not only reject all the five specific hypotheses tested in the present study but also reveal that all the five demographic and socio-economic variables like *age at present*, *education*, *currently working*, *total annual income*, and *place of residence* have no significant influence on the relation between the policies on one hand, and the individual aspect of behavior in particular and the respondents' perceived behavior in general, on the other hand.

The most influenced aspects of behavior are still *child spacing* and *limiting number of children*, while *delayed marriage* and *contraceptive use*, in that order, are the least influenced ones.

For its part, therefore, the government through POPCOM should take a serious look at the present government fertility control policies. This recommendation is based on the study findings indicating that regardless of the demographic and socio-economic background of the respondents, they cannot be positively influenced by the policies in terms of adopting the desirable family planning behavior. This is not to suggest that the government should abandon its special integrated development program in the Muslim areas since it does not discriminate the Muslims in their perception of the influence of the policies on their family planning behavior. Such significant finding can be interpreted as a spill-over effect of the "folk" religious belief of the Muslims that any policy of curtailing procreation either temporarily or permanently done is prohibited by the Islamic religion. Nonetheless, Recommendation 6 which proposes the continuation of the government development program in Muslim Mindanao, still holds in spite of this finding.

The study recommendations advanced in response to the relevant questions, objectives, and hypotheses raised in the present study are summarized below:

A. Policy Recommendations

1. Inclusion of the true doctrinal position of Islam on family planning in the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines";
2. Inclusion of the teaching of population education in the curricula of the Madrasah schools; and
3. Redirection of program thrust from purely contraceptive technology to a combination of artificial and natural family planning methods.

B. Action Measures

1. To conduct continuous frank and open dialogues and consultations with Muslim theologians, scholars, ulamas and other religious leaders on the religious aspects of family planning;
2. To intensify further the special integrated development program in the Muslim areas to enhance in particular the economic and educational development of the Muslim Filipinos, especially the Muslim women; and
3. To launch a Muslim-tailored information campaign to raise the level of knowledge of family planning and its specific components, especially of its related fertility control policies.

C. Research

1. To conduct exploratory studies on natural family planning methods and practices indigenous in the Muslim areas.

D. CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, the three major theoretical perspectives in the study of human fertility have been partially confirmed by the significant findings of the present study. For the particularized theology perspective, which provides that the influence of religion upon fertility attitudes and behavior operates in accordance with particular religion or doctrine or ideology on birth control, the data substantially confirm it, more particularly among respondents who know and agree with the doctrines related to fertility. In brief, the respondents' consistency in responding to the various questions posed by the study would strongly sustain the conclusion that they are significantly influenced by the Islamic religion.

For instance, most of the respondents are highly knowledgeable about the doctrines related to marriage, while the doctrines directly related to family planning are poorly known to them except the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization*. In terms of attitude, the data show that those who know the doctrines have also indicated a very high level of agreement with all the doctrines except the *doctrine on contraception* in which fair agreement is observed. Fair agreement with the *doctrine of contraception* can be accounted for by the respondents' "folk" religious belief that Islam is totally opposed to any form of contraceptive control, and their low level of knowledge of said doctrine.

In terms of the respondents' perceived family planning behavior, the influence of Islam is also evident in the higher percentage of respondents (those who know the doctrines) who perceive no doctrinal influence on their family planning behavior compared to those who claim certain doctrinal influences. This

particular finding does not mean that the respondents do not comply with their religious doctrines. On the other hand, the respondents who perceive no doctrinal influence on their behavior are still abiding with their religion which they perceive as against family planning, more particularly contraceptive use. Moreover, many of the respondents have no adequate knowledge and understanding of the whole family planning program; hence, they cannot easily relate the doctrines to the four aspects of the behavior that these doctrines are expected to influence.

The significant influence of Islam on perceived behavior can also be evidenced by the consistent higher percentage of respondents (those who know the doctrines) who perceive *limiting number of children* and *child spacing* as the most influenced aspects of behavior, and *contraceptive use* as the least influenced aspect of behavior. This observation holds true, given certain demographic and socio-economic characteristics or minority-related statements as factors influencing the nature of relationship between religious beliefs (doctrines) and perceived family planning behavior. To a large extent, it significantly reflects the respondents' strong emotional attachment to their religion which they perceive to be anti-contraceptive technology. Likewise, the same finding indicates the respondents' different religious interpretation and understanding of the program which, in their own perception, it less repugnant to their moral conscience.

More significantly, the influence of the particularized theology perspective on the perceived behavior of the respondents is also indirectly reflected in their level of agreement with selected government fertility control policies. In particular, of those who know the policies, the level of agreement is generally poor, especially with policies which have clear fertility control contents. In fact, only the policies which are neither pro-natalist nor anti-natalist in contents are positively perceived by a significant percentage of the respondents who know the same policies. Again, the preceding findings can be greatly attributed to the prevalent religious belief among Muslim Filipinos that any population control measure adopted by the government is un-Islamic and against the Holy Qur'an. In like manner, the perceived individual aspect of behavior influenced by the policies

is consistent with that of the religious beliefs. In simpler terms, *limiting number of children* and *child spacing* are still the most influenced aspects of behavior, while *contraceptive use* is the least influenced one. In this regard, it can be posited that the influence of religion was also strongly felt by the respondents when they identified the particular aspect of their behavior which was influenced by the policies.

With regard to the social characteristics perspective, which states that the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population determine their fertility levels and differentials, the findings of the study partly support it. The study indicates that the variables *age at present*, *education*, and *place of residence* have significant influence on the nature of relationship between religious beliefs and perceived family planning behavior, while the other variables used in the study, like *currently working* and *total annual income*, are found insignificant in influencing the above relationship.

On the other hand, the minority groups status perspective which states that minority group membership (characterized by the feeling of being discriminated against or threatened by certain groups, e.g., the majority group) was found insignificant in influencing the nature of relationship between religious beliefs and perceived family planning behavior. As shown by the data, all the three minority-related statements used in measuring the respondents' minority consciousness are shown to have no significant influence on the relation between respondents' religious beliefs and perceived family planning behavior.

To summarize, the present study concludes that the population question is a part of the Islamic way of life. The same conclusion is based on the study findings which indicate the very strong influence of Islam on the respondents' behavior and attitudes toward family planning, especially contraceptive use. That Islam is strongly influential in determining the fertility level or behavior of the respondents compared to other factors used in the study, such as the demographic and socio-economic background and minority group characteristics of the respondents, and the fertility control policies of the government, is substantially evidenced by the consistent respondents' high

level of knowledge and agreement with doctrines related to marriage with pro-natalist content; their low level of knowledge of doctrines related to family planning (except the *doctrine on abortion and sterilization*) with relatively less pro-natalist content; their consistent opposition to the aspect of *contraceptive use* which they manifested either by pointing to the aspects *limiting number of children* and *child spacing* or by not claiming any influenced aspect of behavior; their consistent conformity with the contents of the doctrines which are anti-contraceptive in direction, as shown by the higher percentage of respondents who do not perceive any doctrinal influence on their behavior compared to those who perceive certain influences; and by their consistent low level of knowledge and agreement with most of the fertility control policies of the government, except the *policy on the inclusion of cultural value inputs*, which is neither pro-natalist nor anti-natalist in content.

E. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on this present study, a number of suggestions can be offered for future research, which include the following:

1. A comparable study on the family planning knowledge, attitudes and behavior of married Maranao Muslim men, patterned after the design of the present study, is an interesting area of future research. This will be significant in view of the slightly superior role accorded by Islam to Muslim males on matters affecting the family, especially those related to family planning.

2. Future studies can also profitably investigate the family planning knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of other Muslim ethnic groups in the Philippines which are left out by the present study, more specifically, the more dominant ones like the Tausug and Maguindanaon. The same research design adopted by the present study or a similar one can be suggested for the purpose of comparison with the Maranao group. It should be mentioned that within the unifying bond of Islam, Muslim

Filipino groups differ in certain ways. On the issue of family planning, the different Muslim ethnic groups in the Philippines may be exhibiting certain similarities as well as differences, especially in the interpretations of the Islamic position on family planning and the natural family planning methods being used.

3. The students and researchers in public administration can also profitably explore more thoroughly the significant role of the religious sector in the planning and implementation of government programs like family planning. At present, the religious sector is completely neglected in the planning and implementation of the family planning program in the Muslim areas. Unfortunately for the program, there is, in fact, some strong evidence to show that Muslim theologians and local religious leaders can play a critical role in facilitating the acceptance of family planning as a fertility behavior. This is because family planning is generally treated by the target Muslim population as a religious issue.

A study, therefore, of the *agama* structure of the different Muslim Filipino communities is important in determining how it can be utilized as an alternative delivery machinery (aside from the present local units, e.g., barangay or municipal units) for the promotion of family planning information and services. The *agama*, which is the basic socio-economic and political unit of the Muslim Filipino society, is an integration of the socio-economic-political and religious aspects of the Muslim society, in general. For instance, the *imams* are the recognized religious leaders in the different *agamas* and their opinions on vital matters, ranging from politics to religion, are well-taken and respected in the different Muslim Filipino communities.

4. A reanalysis of the influence of minority group status on family planning behavior and attitudes of the Muslim Filipinos, especially the Maranao Muslims, using the data obtained by the present study, is an equally interesting area of future research.