THE RIGHT TIME FOR PARENTHOOD FROM CHILDREN’S POINT OF VIEW

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Problem statement: ART methods enable people to have children beyond their reproductive age. Experts have not yet reached a consensus on the age when the access to ART should be denied or whether any age-limits should be set at all. The goal of our study was to find out children’s opinion regarding the matter.

Methods: Mixed research strategy and methods were used. Survey was held among older children and youth (11-25 years) where almost 1,200 valid questionnaires were used in quantitative analysis of mothers’ and fathers’ preferred age characteristics respectively as well as in qualitative analysis to explore the reasons.

Results: (The numbers are rounded): 15% of children think that ideal age of a mother at birth is under 20 years, 41% prefer the age of 20-24 years, 34% are in favor of age 25-29 years, 8% incline to the age of 30-34 years and a little less than 2% prefer the age of 35-39 years while the rest favor the age up to 49 years. About 10% of children think that ideal age of a father at birth of a child is under 20 years, 25% opt for the age of 20-24 years, 40% for the age of 25-29 years, 17% favor the age of 30-34 years, a little less than 5% prefer the age of 35-39 and the rest prefer the age up to 49 years. The main reasons for the preference of young parents have been the fear of premature loss of parents, the emphasis on mental, physical and financial performance and the importance of grand-parenting.

Conclusion: Children conclusively prefer young parents where 90% of the children want their mothers to be under 30 years, and 92% of the children want their fathers to be under 35 years. When setting the conditions for accessing the ART the interests of all the stakeholders should be considered. Therefore it is fully legitimate to discuss the ART age limit at 45 years for both women and men. It is still 10 to 15 years higher than it would correspond to children’s age preferences.

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