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Facts and Factors Responsible for Higher Fertility Among Muslims of Sagar City

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Abstract

Survey of over 150 Muslim couples within fertility age of Sagar city was conducted specially in the four wards (namely Shukrawari, Shanichari, Machharyai, and Sadar bazar) where this caste is maximally found to reside. The results so obtained have been graphically analysed. Various factors viz. Age at marriage, level of education, socio-economic status and awareness to the family welfare programme etc. have been assesed with respect to fertility. Early marriages, illiteracy and poverty, frequent divorce and remarriages, superstitions, and irrational illogical unscientific concepts of religious beliefs have been identified to be responsible for higher fertility in this caste. Higher education to the Muslim women coupled with the awareness to the family welfare programme have been suggested as the measures to be undertaken immediately in order to control the accelerated population growth and fertility in Muslims of this area.

Introduction

Spatial socio-geographical environment along with economic level has been treated to be responsible for accelerated population growth. Khandekar (1993) and others have shown that the social customs, traditions and age at marriage are the factors which affect the fertility. Mishra (1999) has shown surprising results as regards fertility related to education and economic levels of the couples. Census reports from 1981 to 2001 show that the exponential growth rate of population in Sagar district has been 2.88, 2.20 and 2.10 respectively which indicate a gradual control over population growth at first sight but Shukla (2002) has analysed the caste-wise growth of population of the district and found that the TFR of SC, ST and Muslims of Sagar district is 4.5, 3.5, and 3.4 respectively,which compels one to accept that these castes are accelerating their population growth to alarming levels. In Sagar city, four wards namely Shukrawari, Shanichari, Machharyai and Sadar-bazar are having Muslim population higher than other castes. Thus, in order to find facts and factors responsible for accelerated population growth of Muslims in these areas and how it can be controlled; over 150 families of Muslims within fertility age have been surveyed with the help of a questionnaire and the answers collected have been analysed in this study.

Study Area

Sagar district lies within $23^0 10'$-$24^0 27'$N latitude and $78^0 4'$-$79^0 2'$E longitude. It occupies its position in central north region of Madhya Pradesh. Sagar city lies on Bina Katni central railway line and is 75 kilometers from Bina. Bina is a railway junction

on Delhi-Chennai railway line. According to census of 2001, the population of Sagar district is 2.021 million with growth rate of 2.27, per cent and a density of 147 per square kilometer and sex ratio of 884. The total population of this district resembles Meghalaya state and exceeds the population of Arunachal and Mizoram states. Average literacy of the district is 68.08 per cent.

Methodology

The Muslim population of Sagar city is more than 20 per cent of the total population of the city. Therefore each ward of Muslims was devided into four sectors and 30-40 families within the fertility age were subjected to the question-naire from each sector. In this way a primary survey of more than 150 families was conducted using random sampelling technique. The information collected from ward - members and corporation office was treated to be secondary data.The religious and traditional beliefs among this caste hindered the primary survey but it was overcome with the help of ward members and muslin female teachers related to the couples under survey. Survey was conducted by author and the socio-economiclevel of these families was divided into very low, low, lower middle, middle, and high income groups according to Indian norms of income For statistical analysis Barclay's (1959) techniques were utilised. The results have been interprited by the graphical methods and established theories.

TFR has been calculated as under

$$TFR = 5 \sum_{i=1}^{7} (bi/pi)k$$

Where bi = live births given by the mothers of i age group

i = interval of 5 years

pi = number of mothers of age group i and

k = constant equal to 1.

The facts and factors responsible for higher fertility have been tested with respect to the variables viz. age at marriage, socio-economic and educational levels of the Muslim couples.

Table 1

Age at Marriage and Fertility

Age at marriage(years)	15 to 18		19 to 21		22 to 25		above 25	
Fertility factors	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
% of married couples	0.0	17.6	33.6	52.1	38.6	24.4	27.7	5.9
% of children born up to survey date	8.7	7.8	31.4	28.1	11.7	8.4	1.8	2.1
Children per woman	2.62		1.95		0.80		0.32	
Interval between marriage and first child birth	2 to 3 yr		1 to 2yr		1 to 2 yr		1 to 2 yr	

Source: Field Survey

Results

Fig. 1

Variation between children per woman and age at marriage

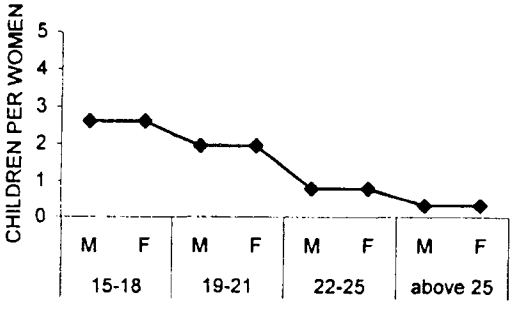
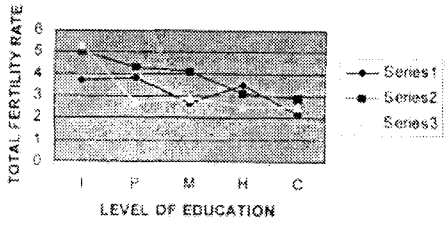


Fig. 1 shows that the number of children per woman born, decreases as the age at marriage increases and most of the muslim male or female prefer early marriage.

Fig. 2

Variation of TFR with Level of Education



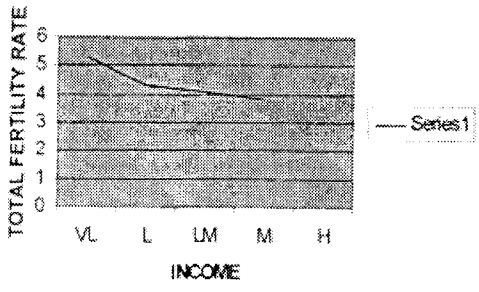
Series 1 Both husband & wife
Series 2 Only husbands
Series 3 Only wives

I - Illiterates
P - Primary pass
M - Middle pass
H - Hr.Sc.pass
C - Graduates

Fig. 2 shows that the TFR reduces with increase in level of education, if both husband and wife are literate TFR varies remarkably. If wives only are literate at a higher level the TFR is seen to be reduced more than literate husbands only.

Fig. 3

Variation in Fertility and Income



VL - Very low, L - Low,
LM - Lower middle M - Middle, H - High

Fig. 3 shows that the level of fertility reduces with the increase of income of the couples.

Table 4 shows that the Muslims of Sagar city are indifferent to Family Welfare Programme .

Discussion

Table 1 shows relation between age at marriage and rate of fertility. The variation has been represented in graph(Fig. 1). It is clear that the percentage of muslim males marrying at the age range 15 to 18 years is zero where as it is 17.6 per cent for females . It is calculated that these women give birth to first child within 2 to 3 years after marriage at the rate of 2.62 children per woman. It is also calculated from the graph that this category of women produced 8.7% boys and 7.8% girls up to the survey date.

During the age range of 19 to 21 years it is found that 33.6% males and 52.1% females have been married and they produced 31.4 per cent boys and 22.1 per cent girls at the rate of 1.95 children per woman, up to the survey date. Age range

Table 2

Education and Fertility

Type of literacy	TFR in case of husband & wife both	TFR in case of husbands only	TFR in case of wives only
Level of education			
Illiterate	3.7	5.0	5.3
Primary	3.8	4.3	2.7
Middle	2.7	4.1	2.9
Higher secondary	3.5	3.1	2.5
College	2.2	2.9	2.5

Source: Field Survey

Table 3

Socio-Economic Level & Fertility

Income group	Very low	Low	Lower middle	Middle
% of couples	14.3	53.8	36.9	5.0
Total fertility rate	5.3	4.3	4.1	3.8

Source: Field Survey

Table 4

Awareness to Family Planning Programme

Age at marriage(years)	**15 to 18**	**19 to 21**	**22 to 24**	**25 and above**
Knowledge of FWP and contraceptives(%)	60.1	78.1	85.5	93.0
Sterilisation opted so far (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.08
Sterilisation preference: After 4 and more children = 0.08%				

Source: Field Survey

22 to 25 years shows 38.6 per cent males and 24.4 per cent females to be married and produced11.7 per cent boys and 8.4 per cent girls at the rate of 0.8 children per woman. Similarly age at marriage above 25 years shows 27.7 per cent males and 5.9% females to be married giving birth to 1.8% boys and 2.1% girls at the rate of 0.32 children per woman in which a gap of 1 to 2 years within two successive births has been observed.

Fig. 1 and the facts discussed above show that the rate of producing children per woman reduces at a faster rate with the increase in the age at marriage but most of the Muslim couples prefer to be married at the early age.

Table 2 shows the results between fertility and level of education and the variation has been shown in Fig. 2. The variation shows that the TFR of the illiterate couple is 3.7 whereas couples educated up to primary level shows 3.8 children per woman. Similarly middle, higher secondary and college level educated couples show TFR to be 2.7, 3.5, 2.2 children per woman resprctively. This simply indicates that the TFR of the illiterates and couples educated up to middle standard are the same hence there is no impact of middle level education on fertility, where as higher educated couples have shown marked variation. This change has been shown in graph (Fig. 2.) If only the husband is illiterate then TFR is found to be 5.0 but as his education is increased it is observed to be 4.4, 4.1, 3.1 and 2.9 for primary middle higher secondary and college level educated husbands respectively.

If only wife is illiterate then TFR is observed to be 5.3 and if educated up to primary middle, higher secondary and college level it is found to be 2.7, 2.9 and 2.5 respectively. These results indicate that in order to reduce fertility the education of women is more effective as compared to the males educated upto the same level.

Table 3 shows fertility of Muslims with respect to their socio-economic status and the variation is represented in graph Fig.3. The surveyed families showed 14.3per cent of very low income group with TFR 5.3, 53.8 per cent of low income group with TFR4.3, 36.9 per cent of lower middle income group with TFR 4.1 and 5.0 per cent middle income group with TFR to be 3.8. Thus the graph Fig. 3 a shows negative relationship between socio-economic level and fertility in muslim couples.

The interest of Muslim couples towards family planning programme has been given in Table 4. This shows that 60 per cent couples who marry within 15 to 18 years of age range do not use contraceptives and FWP techniques even if they know about it. 78.1 per cent couples marrying within 19 to 21 years of age range do not show any interest in contraceptives. Similarly 85.5 per cent couples marrying at the age range 22 to 25 years though they have ideas about contraceptives but they do not prefer to use them. Out of those couples who marry after the age of 25 years, 93 per cent couples know about FWP and contraceptives but only 0.08 per cent of them are found to be acceptors.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Age at marriage, level of education of husband and wife as well as socioe-conomic level of Muslims have been found to affect fertility negatively. Family Welfare Programme (FWP) in this caste does not make much of a difference. In spite of having knowledge of contraceptives they are found to neglect it. Only 0.08 per cent couples opted for sterlisation operation after four or more children when their mothers were on death bed at the time of delivery. Early marriage of women, illiteracy and poverty, frequent divorce and remarriages, superstitions and irrational illogical unscientific concepts of religious beliefs are found to be the main factors responsible for higher

fertility among Muslims of Sagar city. High fertility in Muslims can be brought under control only if the education of women is encouraged up to the higher level, coupled with the knowledge of family welfare programme.

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