CHAPTER V

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The total fertility rate in the state of Tamil Nadu has reached the replacement level. However, 23% of the children born during the period 1996-1998 were of birth order 3 or more (Ramanujam et al., 2001). This requires further studies in fertility so as to know the ways and means not only to bring down the fertility in the vulnerable population and also to sustain the existing fertility rate in the population where the replacement level has already been achieved. The theories in fertility research have seen phenomenal change. The number of factors and hypothesis associated with fertility behaviour has been increasing over the decades (United Nations, 1981). However, research on fertility incorporating social and psychological variables are very rare in India. The social and psychological research on fertility is based on the assumption that behaviour is the product of interaction between the individual and his or her socio-psychological environment.
5.2 Need for the study

Many studies have focused on social, economic, demographic and biological variables to analyse the fertility behaviour. The role of socio-psychological variables is not investigated adequately in the recent past years in India particularly in Tamil Nadu. As such there is an important need to examine the role of psycho-social variables on fertility and the present study is undertaken in one of the Community Development Blocks of Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu and the study has been designed mainly to find out the psycho-social determinants of fertility.

5.3 Objectives

i) To examine the influence of socio-economic and demographic factors on fertility.

ii) To find out the influence of economic and social values of children on fertility behaviour.

iii) To study inter-spouse communication as a factor associated with fertility.
iv) To study the relationship between exposure to Information Education Communication activities and fertility.

v) To study the knowledge and perception on contraception in relation to fertility.

5.4 METHODOLOGY

5.4.1 Study Area

In India, Community Development Block (CDB) is the smallest administrative units for implementing rural development programmes. It was therefore decided to conduct the study in one of the CDB’s i.e Athoor Block in Tamil Nadu state of India. It has experienced remarkable decline in its fertility levels since the late 1950s. This block is situated in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu with an area of 23625 hectares. The block consists of three town panchayats and twenty one villages with a total population of 113183 with male population of 56918 and female population of 56265. The male literates were 60 percent and female literates were 39 percent. The scheduled caste population was 24 percent. More than half of the male workers
(53 percent) and 73 percent of the female workers were agricultural labourers.

5.4.2 Sample for the study

The sample selected for the study consisted of 500 currently married women in the age group of 15-49 years. A multistage stratified random sampling was adopted and initially the villages in the blocks were selected. The number of ever married women aged 15-49 years in all the 21 villages of the Athoor block was collected. The villages were stratified into three groups based on the number of ever married women (< 500 women, 500 -1000 women and 1000 to 1500 women). From each group, two villages were randomly selected. At the second stage the number of eligible women in each village was selected using probability proportional to size (PPS) of the eligible women and within the village the eligible women for the study were systematically selected.
5.4.3 Variables

For the purpose of this study, the fertility measured in terms of the total number of children ever born (CEB) to a couple was taken as the dependent variable. Then, the independent variables related to fertility were identified and classified. The following are the five major psycho-social variables considered for this study:

- Economic value of children
- Social value of children
- Inter-spouse communication
- Information Education Communication
- Knowledge and Perception on contraception

Besides, certain socio-economic and demographic variables were also included for analysis

- Social variables - education, religion, caste, type of marriage, women’s autonomy, occupation of women and their husband, type of family and residence before marriage.
Economic variables- land holding, household amenities, drinking water facility, type of house, fuel used for cooking, monthly family income.

Demographic variables - age of the women, age at marriage of women, number of siblings, child loss and future fertility preference.

The other potential variables which were related with the number of children ever born include adoption of contraception and motivation of health personnel for contraceptive use.

5.4.4 Data collection

For the purpose of the study, the data were gathered from 500 eligible women (currently married women in the reproductive ages 15-49 years) using a pre-designed and pre-tested interview schedule. Six questions were framed for each of the psychosocial variables which were measured by a five point Likert type scale. Using the responses, an index was developed for each of the item to relate with the number of children ever born.
Standard of living index was also formulated using appropriate variables with a suitable scoring scheme.

5.4.5 Statistical analysis

The relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable was analysed using correlation test and the association between them was examined using chi-square test. Multiple regression analysis was carried out to bring out the significant variables that are related with the dependent variable i.e. number of children ever born. The logistic regression technique was also applied to understand the factors responsible for higher number of children ever born (greater than 2).

5.5 Findings of the study

1. The respondents selected for the present study were currently married rural women. They belonged to the age group of 15 to 49 years. Their mean age was 30 years with standard deviation of 8.

2. Seventy five percent of the women belonged to backward class and 25% were scheduled caste. Sixty
percent of the women were literates and are able to read and write.

3. The mean age at marriage for the respondents was 19 years.

4. The children ever born to the respondents ranged from 1 to 7. The mean number of children ever born to the respondent was found to be 2.33 with a standard deviation of 1.07.

5. The mean ideal number of boys desired by the women was 1.35 and the mean ideal number of girls desired was 1.18.

6. The knowledge on female sterilization is universal (99%) followed by knowledge on Intra Uterine Device (IUD). Fifty six percent of the respondents reported to know about male sterilization, forty four percent were aware of oral pill and thirty one percent knew about condom. However, knowledge about natural methods and their practice were reported to be rare.

7. It was found that sixty one percent of the female respondents used one or the other contraceptive.
methods and 94% among them had undergone female sterilization.

8. The results indicated that the majorities (56%) of the respondents were in the low standard of living and 18% were found to have a high standard of living.

9. Women’s autonomy was found to be as low as 11% as per the finding of the study in a patriarchal rural society.

10. Muslim women had the highest mean children ever born compared to Christian and Hindu counterparts.

11. The fertility among scheduled caste women were found to be highest compared to women of backward community.

12. Illiterate women had a higher number of children ever born than literate women and the test of significance for mean number children was found statistically significant at 1 percent level.

13. The mean number of children ever born was higher for women with low standard of living than women those of high standard of living.
14. The mean children ever born were more among women in the age group of 35+ year's women than women in the lower age groups (15-24 years).

15. Women who got married at 18 or less years had highest mean children ever born.

16. The mean children ever born were more among women who experienced child loss than those women who had not experienced any child loss. The t-test revealed significant difference between child loss and children ever born.

17. The mean children ever born were high among women who used contraceptive methods. This may due to parity specific fertility. That is couples adopting contraceptive methods after achieving their desired number of children. The t-test revealed significant difference in mean CEB between women who used contraception and women not used contraception.

18. The mean children ever born were less for respondents who were visited by health personnel.
19. The mean children ever born were high among women who had perceived social value for children.

20. Inter-spouse communication made the difference in the fertility. There were few children ever born among couple having inter-spouse communication when compared to their counterparts.

21. Respondents who received IEC messages were found to have less number of children ever born.

22. Perception on contraception was also found to be related with fertility as the number of ever born children was higher for those with poor perception.

23. Education, type of marriage, child loss, age of women, age at marriage was also found related to fertility.

24. The fertility behaviour is found to be associated with Information education and communication received by the women respondents as they produced less number of children ever born compared to others.

25. Mantel-haenszel chi-square test was used to control the confounding variable age and study the factors on fertility. This revealed that the economic value, social
value, inter-spouse communication, information education communication and perception on contraception did not reveal any significant association between women with less than two children and more than two children.

26. The Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant relation between the dependent variable (children ever born) and that age of the women, age at marriage of women and education of women.

27. Positively significant correlations were obtained for independent variables social value of children, information education and communication perception on contraception and children ever born.

28. The regression analysis revealed that psycho-social variables explain five percent of variation in the children ever born. The Information education and communication also showed significant relation with children ever born. There was more number of children ever born to those with less exposure of IEC.
29. When regression analysis was carried out for all the psycho social variables with age of women only the Information education and communication explained 19% of variation CEB.

30. The stepwise multiple regression analysis by considering all the independent variables with and ever born revealed that 54% of variation in children ever born is explained by total persons in the family, age of the women, age at marriage of women, child loss and information education and communication.

31. Logistic regression analysis was attempted to find out the role of factors responsible for having more than two children. The analysis revealed significant relation for age of respondent, age at marriage, persons in the family, child loss and standard of living.
5.6 Policy Implications

1. The social value of children for couple proved to be a factor fostering more number of children ever born. In rural areas parents considered children as social assets. Therefore there is a need for changing people’s value orientation with respect to children as social capital.

2. The Information education and communication shows significant relation with the children ever born i.e minimum number of children are found to have for those who received IEC messages. Hence the IEC is an important factor and has to be fully strengthened further to reduce the fertility in the rural areas.

3. The Perception of contraception also shows significant relation with the children ever born. That is those who have not heard or disagreed to contraception found to produce more number of children. Family planning programmes should encourage contraceptive practices by feeding more knowledge and information to the newly
married couples and also removing misconceptions about contraception.

4. The age at marriage of women showed negative significant relationship with the children ever born. Hence it is recommended to consider an increase in the minimum age at marriage to 21 years for women and at least 25 years for men. This study supports the National Population Policy goal 2000 that “To promote delayed marriage for girls, not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age”.

5. The child loss shows positive relation with the children ever born. Hence steps should be taken to reduce the infant mortality rate for bringing corresponding changes in fertility level. This also supports the national population policy 2000 to reduce the infant morality rate below 30 per 1000 live births.
6. The standard of living index shows significant relation with the children ever born. Therefore the standard of living has to be improved among the people in order to reduce the fertility level.

7. The member in the family shows significant relation with children ever born and hence it is an important variable to contribute more number of children ever born. Planned small families can reduce the children ever born in India.

5.7 Suggestions for further research

In this study only a limited number of psychological variables and social variables were considered for analyzing fertility. Hence an in-depth analysis of psycho-social variables in some more community development block is necessary to explore other significant factors related to fertility. Case studies of villages exposed to family planning information can be undertaken. Comparative studies of villages with different levels of development can also be attempted to find its relative influence on the fertility of the people.
5.8 Conclusion
In this study an attempt was made to examine the psycho-social determinants of fertility. The findings revealed that the family size, age of the women and child loss showed significant positive relationship with number of children ever born. The age at marriage of women indicated a negative relationship with the number of children ever born. Of those five psycho-social variables taken in this study three variables viz., exposure to Information Education and Communication, Social Value of Children and Perception on Contraception revealed significant relationship with children ever born. These implied that increasing the visit of health personnel and discussing more about small family with the respondent, media broadcast on small family and contraception through radio, television and newspaper will reduce the fertility. The logistic regression analysis revealed that standard of living index shows a significant relationship with number of children ever born and concludes that raising standard of living as one of the possible ways to have minimum children ever born.