CHAPTER VII
MAJOR FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The present study is undertaken with a view to highlight the trends in the child labour situation between 1961 and 1981 in the context of the demographic transition, if any, in Tamil Nadu and trace the pattern and growth of child labour and its distribution district-wise, sector and occupation-wise at the macro level using secondary data. A supportive village level study is also undertaken to bring out the determinants of child labour.

This study is based both on secondary and primary sources of data. Census, Sample Registration Scheme, records at the Directorate of Family Welfare Programme etc are sought for generating secondary data for macro-level study. At the primary level, the data base has been constructed in four geographical locations namely Thanjavur, Anna, Madurai and Kamarjar districts in the Southern parts of Tamil Nadu using Multi-stage and purposive sampling. Correlation and path analysis techniques have been used to highlight the relationship between dependant and independent variables and also to identify the direction of relationship-especially between fertility and its determinants.

At macro level, the main demographic features found in Tamil Nadu between 1961 and 1981 are:

Declining growth of population in Tamil Nadu from 1961 to 1981 from 11.80 to 17.50 percent as against a steady increase in the population at national level from 21.50 to 25.00 percent during the same period.
- Increasing population density from 259 in 1961 to 372 per sq.km by 1981; and sex ratio of 992 in 1961 to 978/1000 in 1981 as against the density of 216 per sq.km. and sex-ratio of 933/1000 for the nation as a whole in 1981.

- A higher percentage of urban population (33%) in 1981 relative to 1961 (26%) against the national average of 23.74 percent (1981).

- Increase in the age at marriage for girls from 18.30 in 1961 to 20.20 in 1981 as against the national figure of 18.30 in 1981.

  Steep decline in Crude Birth Rate from 34.90 in 1961 to 28.00 by 1981 as against the national figure of C.B.R. 33.90 in 1981. The Total Fertility Rate in the state (3.40 in 1981) in comparison with the national rate (4.5 in 1981) is favourable.

- Presence of a high Crude Death Rate (11.80 by 1981) (National rate is 12.50) and also Infant Mortality Rate of 91/1000 in 1981 as against the national rate of 110/1000 are noticed.

- Increase in the literacy rate between 1961 and in 1981 (31.43 to 45.80) in Tamil Nadu compared to the national figures (24% in 1961 and 36.23% in 1981) as also an increase in female literacy rate from 18.20 in 1961 to 35.00 in 1981 has been registered as against the national level from 18.70 to 24.82 percent.

  Tendencies of rather stable old dependancy ratio of 9.9 in 1961 and 11.00 in 1981 along with a declining young dependency ratio from 66.20 to 59.80 for the same period are more in favour of the state than at the All India level.
Work participation rate has declined both in the rural and urban areas as well as among male and female from 45.60 in 1961 to 39.30 in 1981 whereas the national figures stood at 33.50 for 1981. Further in the state, the decline is steep in the rural areas from 49.60 to 43.20 and also for female from 31.30 to 22.40 for 1961 and 1981.

The emerging trends relating to children and child-wage labour situations in the state are:

1. A slight decline in the percentage share of children in the total population from 23.92 in 1961 to 23.87 percent in 1981 has been recorded.

2. The percentage share of child workers to the total workers in the State had come down from 7 percent in 1961 to 4.56 percent in 1981.

3. An increase in the school enrollment has been registered for boys and girls over the three decades (from 51.15 to 64.90 percent for boys and 31.86 to 49.89 percent for girls).

4. A general decline in the proportion of child workers over decades - percentage wise from 12.59 in 1961 to 7.54 percent in 1981 has been recorded but not in their absolute number which was more pronounced during 1971 - 1981 period.

5. The proportion of female child-workers, to the total adult female workers in the rural - urban setting together has been declining (from 8.08 in 1961 to 7.06 in 1981) as also their male counter
parts. However a relatively higher level of female child labourer component is maintained as against male child labour percentage.

6. But in the rural areas alone the proportion of child-workers to total workers eventhough twice the number of rural-urban combination earliar jS recording a declining tendency.

   Sector-wise, majority of rural child workers are in agriculture and allied activities (77.10\%) with a down ward trend over years. Majority of the urban child-labourers of both sexes are found in Manufacturing - processing - serviceing category.

   However, the magnitude of child labour significantly differs across the districts in Tamilnadu. It is more in the non-agricultural districts than in agriculture-dominated districts.

   The share of child labourers to the total workers is noticed with a declining trend both in rural and urban areas along with intra-district as well as sex wise variations.

   Thus, the percentage share of female child workers to the total workers is more than male child workers in all the districts both rural and urban during all the three decades under study.

   While male child work participation rate showed a declined in all the districts during 1971 to 1981, female child work participation rate (both rural and urban) has increased in all districts during 1971 to 1981.
Prominant inter-sectoral shifts that are noticed between 1961 and 1981 are:

Primary sector continues to employ majority of rural child-workers that too female mostly in primary activities and the Secondary sector activities claiming the next position. However, urban male child-workers are found mostly in 'Manufacturing and related services (M.R.5.) household and other then house-hold industry'categories (secondary).

The decadal variations in the incidence of girls in 'Trade and related activities' (Tertiary Sector) in urban location are found to be more in 1981 than in 1971. Another general feature observed is the declining importance of primary activities and increase in the industry - oriented activities especially in textiles production and related work (75) indicating the relative prominence of industrial absorption of female child workers from primary sector towards secondary sector located in urban and semi-urban areas. Such occupational mobility from traditional agriculture and allied sectoral activities to diversified industrial sector oriented activities is found in most of the districts except in South Arcot the Nilgiris and Kanyakumari districts. Again it is found that urban children (male and female) do non-traditional industrial activities and rural child workers do traditional agro-based activities in almost all the districts.

A considerable amount of sectoral and occupational mobility are noticed among working children of both the sexes in
rural as well as urban areas of majority of the districts; more so in the districts like Tirunelveli, Dharmapuri and Madurai in the case of inter-sectoral mobility and Madurai, North Arcot, Coimbatore the Nilgiris and Changalpattu in the case of intra sectoral mobility. These changes may be due to planned development thrust leading to industrial diversification and restructuring noticed in the economy.

The major conclusions arrived on the basis of micro level village studies on incidence of child-labour and parental fertility are not at variance with the micro level secondary data analysis with respect to:

1. Total fertility rate is found to be same level (3.4) both at the State as well as micro study area levels.

2. As for the magnitude of population by religion and caste groups both at the state and sample levels Hindus are dominant and they belong to Backward Caste groups by majority.

3. Male child work participation is more in the rural areas both in the study area and in the state. But in the relatively urban study locations the proportion of female child-workers have an edge over the male child workers.

4. But, at the micro level, sectoral mobility of child-labour over the three decades show the flow from primary and tertiary towards secondary sector. In one of the micro study area viz. Thanjavur, it is seen that in the rural dominant Thanjavur the intergenerational occupational mobility (from parents to
children) is from agriculture to service oriented activities in the absence of secondary sector. In the other three relatively urbanised locations, where more of small scale and Cottage production units have come up, the occupational mobility is from primary to secondary or from primary and tertiary to secondary sector activities, both inter generational as well as status quo occupational mobility among child-labourers.

5. As far determinants of birth rate, a comparison of the determinants of birth rate at the macro level with that of the fertility of child-labour parents at the sample level shows that major factors viz, literacy and income (agricultural output in case of macro and family income in case of micro) are found common factors influencing fertility at both the levels.

However, the following deviation have been noticed between macro and micro level situations.

1. While child-work participation rate is only 7.34 at the State level it is very high (46%) in the study area mainly due to the purposive sampling adopted in selecting child-labour concentrated locations.

2. Whereas percentage-wise majority of child-labours at the state level are rural in character in the study areas they are more non-rural.
3. While the total urban fertility rate for the state is 2.7 it is relatively higher (3.2) in the sample areas.

The aggregate data from the four district locations in Tamil Nadu reveal a set of characteristics that go to strengthen the hypothesis formed earlier.

When the total 495 (37.87) child-labourers (of all age) are apportioned between the three caste groups in the study areas, it is found that 305 are drawn from 243 Backward caste families followed by 164 from 142 Scheduled Caste families and 26 from 15 Forward caste families. Thus numerically speaking child-workers from Backward Caste groups top the list relegating the other two groups to the background. Percentage-wise distribution of child-labourers in each of the caste groups shows that the Backward Caste group emerges out predominantly taking into consideration the total number of children committed to work from the same age (0-14) closely followed by Schedule Caste group. (The F.C. caste-group of families being negligible in the sample, the percentage incidence for the same is not considered).

There is variation in the commitment of children for wage work from out of the total number of children of all age groups from each one of the general caste groups. Also the findings that the proportion of working children between 0-14 years out of the total number of 0-14 age group children across the general caste groups in the four locations runs parallel to the effect that the incidence of child-labour for wage is higher in the Backward 'Caste
group (53.92%) followed by S.C. group strengthening the formulated hypothesis that variation do exist among caste groups in the incidence of child-labour. However, variations in the incidence of child-labour in the four study locations are to-be explained more in terms of employment opportunities available, in these areas rather than on the caste basis alone. But these variations on the basis of employment opportunities eventhough cannot be stretched too far to the whole of Tamil Nadu, this identification forms the back-drop to the location - specific socio-economic situations explaining the varying levels of child-labour situations apart from caste base.

As far the availability of paid juvenile jobs,, Kamarajar district claims the first position followed by Anna district while Thanjavur and Madurai districts trail behind. In the first two locations wage-work availability is assured in non-agricultural sectors. Wage work for children are relatively less and seasonal or irregular and provided mostly by the primary (agriculture/fishing) sectors in Thanjavur district where seasonality of occupations oscillate between primary and tertiary sectors only, as the secondary sector is conspicuous by its absence in the sample. On the other hand working children have ^lather wider choice in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors - both in Anna and Madurai districts where unorganed and unskilled units provide jobs for many. On the other extreme it is found that in Kamarajar district child-labourers are accommodated in larger proportions in the permanent jobs available in the secondary or teritary sectors. Those having
jobs in primary sector are absent from the sample here. The
data generated from the four locations put together go to support
that wage work opportunities attract and encourage parents
to send their children for work.

When mothers were asked to ascribe relative
weights for the structured and stated reasons, their ratings
varied across the locations. When ranking the availability
of job-opportunities as a reason is considered among the locations
largest percentage of mothers (clubbing the values of rankings)^
(45%) in Annal followed by those (41%) in Kamarajar and
Thanjavur (36%) ane L relatively less (30%) in Madurai have repor­
ted so. Within each location this reason has emerged as the
third important one in Anna and fourth important one in the
other three locations.

When fertility status of parents and its linkage
to child-labour commitment is studied, it is found that more
number of children in the families have bearing on child-labour
practice. At the aggregate level, a good majority (72.50%)
of parents have more than two living children and nearly 1/3
(31.50%) of the parents have three children each. Across
the study locations, while 87 percent of the families contacted
in Thanjavur location, have more than two children each', such
category 74 percent in Madurai followed by 67 percent in Anna
and 62 percent in Kamarajar district study location. Again,
majority (54%) of the child labourers at the aggregate level
belong to second and higher birth orders. Even among the 184 
(46%) first birth order child labourers out of the 400 sample 
working children, only 44 (11%) are from single-child families. 
Presence of unemployable younger makes the relatively eldest 
among the children to seek wage work. Location-wise, as much 
as 28 percent of child-workers are of the third and higher 
birth orders especially in Thanjavur where this category forms 
50 percent of the sample child-labourers followed by Anna and 
Kamarajar districts. The evidences gathered and analysed 
conclusively prove that among the many reasons attributed by 
(‘ill the interviewed mothers for child-labour practice, nearly 
1/3 of them have mentioned that more number of children as the 
first in the ranking among the three important reasons. On the 
whole it has emerged as the third important reason. But, inter 
locational differences are seen in its relative importance. 
Whereas in Thanjavur and Kamarajar district locations, it has 
formed the third important reason and fourth important reason in 
the other two locations. Thus there exists a positive relation­ 
ship between more number of children and practice of child­ 
labour in the study areas.

Educational status of the child labourers shows 
that in almost all the cases, they are either non-starter illiter­ 
ates or dropped but semi-literates. At the aggregate level, as 
much as 72.50 percent of child labourers are dropouts from 
school mostly at primary level.
At the aggregate level, 'not attending School' has emerged as the fourth main reported reason (in ranking) for child labour by 39 percent of mothers. But its relative importance varies across locations. Adding first, second and third order of ranking together for this reason, it is found that while 56 percent of mothers reported it as a main reason in Kamarajar followed by those in Madurai (46.6%) and only 1/5 of mothers in Thanjavur. Within each location, it has emerged as the first main reason in Kamarajar but third in Madurai and fifth in Anna and Thanjavur districts. **As such the hypothesis that dropping out of school leads to child-labour activity is found to be true in the study areas.**

Thus, identified factors like poverty, inadequacy of family income, irregular/seasonal occupation of parents especially in Thanjavur and Anna and Madurai and higher tendency to save and permanancy of existing juvenile jobs in the case of Kamarajar district, general illiteracy of parents, dropping out of children from school, presence of more number of children in the families and also, non-working dependents in the families and availability of wage work opportunities are the identified determinants of child-labour practice in the study areas.

The existing socio-economic and demographic factors are found to influence parental fertility. Families with non-working fathers have more fertility than regularly working category. Similar pattern is found when mothers are not working
Economic status of the family differentially influenced fertility without showing any definite pattern. But upward mobility in economic status through occupational mobility depresses fertility as agricultural labourers have relatively more number of children (3.64) than self-employed/salaried category (3.08) and among mothers, while those with wage work have, 5.77 children and others have 2.88 children only. While hut-dwellers have more children per family than those found in pucca houses. Muslim mothers have relatively high fertility (4.1) than Christians or Hindus. Scheduled caste mothers have relatively high fertility (3.64) than Forward Caste mothers (3.06). Mother's education is found to be negatively related to fertility with illiterate mothers having relatively more children than those educated upto middle school. Fertility among parents in joint families is higher than those in nuclear families. Here, more children may be desired for child-labour to reduce economic strain of big family. Family Planning adoptor mothers seemed to have an excess fertility of 0.5 than non-adopters.

Parents of child-labourers are found to posses different value dimensions-economic and non-economic of children which influence this fertility. Value of children is operationalised through related variables and correlated with parental fertility to find out the relationship. One dimension selected is the total number of child-labourers in the families. It showed a direct influence on fertility in the sample population as a
whole though majority of the families are single child-labourer families. While single child-labourer families have an average of 3.34 living children, in the two-child labour families it is 4.33. Another dimension is based on the assumption that parents who perceive sufficiency of child-wage have low fertility and vice-versa, while the former group is found to have a fertility of 3.05, the latter with 3.79 in the sample. Again interviewed mothers with a fear of losing child labour earnings registered a higher fertility rate (3.83) than those mothers having the confidence of managing such an eventuality had a relative low fertility (2.75). Also, those who would like to have more number of children in the presence of more employment opportunities are found to have more children (4.06) than those who do not like to have additional children even if juvenile job opportunities are available. The preference level of mothers when quantified, it is found that more than 3/4ths of the mothers would have preferred committing their additional or less chance-children than the present number to wage work for augmenting family income. Parents who lost their, male/female child/children have relatively higher fertility than those who did not. Also the path analysis exercise showing the relationship of the identified determinants with parantal fertility has also confirmed that the value of children for wage work being the principal (0.5055) determinant of parental fertility.

With respect to the contributing or causal variable
leading to identification of direct and indirect influence on child-labour on fertility, the path analysis technique used go to strengthen the following linkages. Value of children followed by contraception methods followed by parents, total number of working children, education of mothers and family income in the same order having direct influence on parental fertility while family income followed by total number of working children in the family mothers' education and value of children have indirect but positive influence on parented fertility; But caste has only indirect and negative influence. When direct and indirect influences are clubbed together, value of children followed by family income, contraception methods adopted and total number of working children have in the family positive influence. However, mother's education and caste have negative influence on fertility.

Thus, existing child labour in the family and parental fertility are found to be mutually influencing further in child-labour practice in the status quo economic-cum-demographic scene in the study area, which in a ways forms a vicious circle.

**Policy implications**

The concern areas that emerge out of the main findings of the present study to combat the twin evils viz. child-labour and high fertility are:

A Compulsory enrolment of children in schools and their
subsequent retention under universal primary education up to 14 years on a priority basis as envisaged by the Constitution of India and provision of free and compulsory education to girls upto middle-school level at least.

B - Population Education is to be made an important component of the higher secondary and collegiate educational programmes.

C - Effective implementation of non-formal educational programme package-with relevant and situation specific family welfare, nutrition and health contents including child care-leading to reduction in infant mortality-for women.

D - Effective and easily adoptable birth control methods with rural reach.

Though legislations are not wanting in prohibiting child wage labour both at the state and central levels, in practice strict enforcement seems to be the only answer for mitigating the evils. It is high time that child-labour utilization is treated as an offence committed equally by parents and employers and stringent penal provisions may be enforced on parents committing child-labour on two counts - one denying education for children and committing them to wage work at tender age.

Also, child labour employment in the unorganised sectors too are to be viewed seriously for penal action as well
as empowering the machinery implementing the legal provisions fairly and adequately. Again it is not to demand wages for child labour on par with adults as it would indirectly legalise child labour and ultimately resulting in child abuse. It is also desirable to have fresh thinking on ameliorative programmes that are being implemented now such as wage_wdtk with food and education as practiced in some organised or production units that does not diminish child-labour practice.

It is all the more important that regular and innovative income generating employment programmes for parents are conceived and implemented on a wider scale where child labour concentrations are identified to fight poverty and inadequate income induced child labour.

It would ensure social and economic cost effectiveness when economic as well as welfare programming are dovetailed such as devising incentive packages for small family beneficiaries of welfare and economic programmes. This tieup may be in the form of higher subsidies for the loan of take, easy repayment schedules, birth-linked family insurance, priority level regular employment as well as welfare service supports etc. for small families.

In addition to the outlined policy frame to induce acceptance of controlled births and child labour involvement for wages the above-said positive measures would go a long way for cutting down both birth rates and child labour.