ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FERTILITY DETERMINANTS AMONG POPULATION GROUPS OF MEERUT DISTRICT, UTTAR PRADESH

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The aim of the present investigation was to study the determinants of fertility among the Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs of Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh. The selection of these three population groups provides a suitable platform for examining the determinants of fertility in different strata of Indian society with varied religious and socio-economic backgrounds. A total of 987 married women in their reproductive age (15 to 49 years of age) constituted the sample for the present study. Of these, there were 296 Ansari women, 314 Brahmin women and 377 Jatav women. The data was collected primarily through interview schedules that focused on general household information and on fertility and related aspects. The data was analyzed for various measures of population composition, basic measures of fertility, indices and rates pertaining to socio-economic status, and reproductive profile of women. The main statistical tools used during the present study were measures of central tendency and dispersion; t-test; ANOVA; correlation and step wise regression.

The demographic as well as socio-economic indicators clearly suggest that among the population groups studied, Brahmins are more progressive demographically. The estimates (primarily relating to fertility) for Brahmins place them much ahead of the other two population groups studied i.e. Ansaris and Jatavs, the population of Uttar Pradesh and also the Indian national population. On the contrary, both Ansaris and Jatavs are lagging behind the national and state (Uttar Pradesh) populations. The present study highlights factors that are having a significant effect on fertility of Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs. The factors that have shown a significant impact only among Ansaris are ‘husband’s occupation’ and ‘number of sons desired by husband’. The factors that have shown a significant impact only among Brahmins are ‘proportion of sons surviving’ and ‘husband's level of education’. The factor that has shown a significant impact only among Jatavs is ‘number of sons desired by woman’. In addition to these, a number of factors have affected fertility in all or at least two of the population groups. However, the level of their association with fertility differs in each of the three studied groups.

The study suggests that a general improvement (primarily for Ansaris and Jatavs) in terms of better education status (primarily of women), standard of living, occupational
opportunities, exposure to media, better and channelized (involving socio-religious considerations) knowledge and access to family planning methods will certainly bring about a marked change in the scenario thereby helping in achievement of the goal of lower levels of population growth.