Summary and Conclusions
CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The main aim of the present study is to examine whether migration from a rural to an urban area influences fertility, and if so, to what extent. Some of the earlier studies have formulated certain hypotheses on the effects of migration on fertility. These are: (i) generation: the fertility behaviour of migrants may be dictated by the childhood influence on fertility values at the place of origin; (ii) socialization: fertility behaviour of second generation migrants may change at the place of destination; (iii) disruption: fertility may decline at least for a short period after migration due to disruption; (iv) adaptation: migrants may adopt fertility norms and values of the place of destination; (v) selection: migrants may be selected from some upper socio-economic stratum and hence, have a level of fertility different from the rural non-migrants. Results of most of the previous studies show a strong generation effect of migration on fertility; only a few studies found evidence of the disruption effect on fertility and a small number of studies have shown the adaptation effect of migration on fertility. However, the migrants are also known to differ from non-migrants in terms of socio-economic background, and this factor (selection
effect) may also contribute to fertility differentials by migration. Many of the studies reviewed had not controlled for socio-economic backgrounds and some of the effects observed may, in part or full, have been contributed by the selection factor. Besides, a large proportion of the studies have examined the behaviour of international migrants, or long distance migrants, who move from one cultural setting to another. In India, however, migration is predominantly short distance, within the state of birth itself. The fertility implications of such a migration might be different from those observed in earlier studies.

In the present study, the effects of rural to urban migration on fertility are examined while controlling for socio-economic and demographic characteristics. A conceptual framework is prepared based on the hypotheses and research questions of the present study. The present study is an attempt to examine some of the above mentioned hypotheses on fertility of rural to urban migrants. For this purpose, the fertility behaviour of rural to urban migrants is compared with that of rural non-migrants (stayers) at the places of origin and urban non-migrants at the place of destination.

The town of Krishnagiri in the state of Tamil Nadu in India was selected for the present study. Data on background characteristics, the process of migration, and fertility behaviour and desires were collected from a sample
of 211 currently married migrant men in the age range 24-54. A sample of 191 non-migrant men in the same age range was selected from the same town as a comparison group. The sampling was two-stage systematic. Besides, 91 migrant and 114 non-migrant never married men in the age groups 21-39 years were also interviewed. Based on the list of places of origin of rural to urban migrants, a sample of 174 currently married rural stayers in the desired age groups was selected systematically from three villages in the rural areas from where migrants mostly originated. In addition to that, 95 never married rural non-migrant men in the desired age groups were interviewed.

9.2. PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION

The present study is done in a (Krishnagiri) town of Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, India. The state of Tamil Nadu is situated in the southern part of India, has a higher literacy rate and higher urban population than the national average, whereas in terms of average per capita income, the state is just below the national average. During the past twenty years, the fertility of state has been declined much more rapidly as compared to other states. Dharmapuri district is one of the most backward districts, has a lower literacy rate, urbanisation as well as proportion of workers in non-agricultural sector than the state average. The rural-urban fertility difference is very large and notable and there is substantial migration from rural to
urban areas of this district. Therefore, Krishnagiri town, the largest in the Dharmapuri district, has been selected for the study.

The rural to urban migrants are from relatively advanced (or less backward) castes, whereas a larger proportion of the rural non-migrants are from most backward castes. Most of the respondents in the sample population belong to the Hindu religion, a few persons who belong to other religions appeared only in the urban population. Migrants (married as well as never married) have higher socio-economic status than rural non-migrants with respect to education, caste status, occupational status, income, ownerships of consumer goods, housing conditions etc. On the other hand, in many respects, the migrants are similar to urban non-migrants.

9.3. MIGRATION PROCESS

By design, only the migrants from rural areas were selected, almost all of whom were from the same district (Dharmapuri) or a neighbouring district (Salem). The mean age at migration to Krishnagiri town for currently married migrants is 29.9 years. However, many had moved first to another town and the mean age at first migration to an urban area is much lower (22.7 years). The mean duration of stay at Krishnagiri is 9.7 years. The main reasons for first migration to an urban area were education of respondents, followed by the employment and change of profession or
business; and the main reasons for migration to Krishnagiri were its central location, followed by transfer of jobs and change of profession or business. Most of the migrants were working prior to migration (61.0 percent). Nearly two-thirds of the migrants had got married prior to migration to Krishnagiri.

Almost all the migrants moved to the town with their families (wife and children), the instances of separation of spouses were very few. Most of the migrants initially lived in rented houses. Many of the migrants did face some problems like housing, water etc., immediately following migration to Krishnagiri (42.6 percent). A very small number of migrants (11.9 percent) did get financial support from their families (mostly from parents) after migration to Krishnagiri for maintenance or as investment capital. At present, a large proportion of migrants help their relatives, mostly parents or brothers and sisters, at their native place. Many migrants also continue to own land in their native villages. Consequently, they do maintain contact with the place of origin. A majority of the migrants are satisfied with the present conditions and would like to stay at Krishnagiri permanently (57.4 percent).

The never married migrants were mostly selected from the younger age groups and one-thirds of them were born and brought up in urban areas. The mean age at migration to Krishnagiri is 16.7 years, the mean age at first migration to
an urban area is lower (14.7 years). The mean duration of stay at Krishnagiri is 7.4 years. Most of the never married migrants accompanied their parents. About three-fourths are satisfied with the present conditions and would like to stay at Krishnagiri permanently.

9.4. FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR

The migrants have higher mean age at marriage; smaller mean children ever born and living; smaller desired and ideal family size and higher contraceptive use than the rural non-migrants. But the urban non-migrants are very close to the migrants in terms of indicators of fertility and fertility desires. When controlled for socio-economic and demographic variables, both the urban groups have overall lower fertility, higher age at first birth, and lower desired and ideal family size.

The never married married migrants have notably higher mean desired age at marriage (of the respondent and wife to be) and desired age at first birth than the rural non-migrants, but more or less similar to that of never married urban non-migrants even when controlled for the socio-economic and demographic variables. The mean desired family size does not show any significant difference between the three groups while controlling for socio-economic and demographic classes.
9.5. VALUE OF CHILDREN

The migrants have substantially higher educational aspirations for their children (son's and daughter's) as compared to the rural non-migrants. Aspirations of migrants are also higher than those of the urban non-migrants, though only marginally. A substantially higher proportion of the rural non-migrants expect their children's help when they are grown up and the degree of dependency on financial support from their children in future is much greater than in the urban groups. Further, a greater proportion of the rural non-migrants expect to live with their married children in future as compared to the urban groups. While controlling for socio-economic and demographic variables, the value of children is lower in the urban groups than the rural group.

9.6. RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION AND FERTILITY

The fertility of the migrants is found to be lower than that of the rural non-migrants but marginally higher than that of the urban non-migrants. In order to see what has caused the difference, first, the selection effect is separated from the difference in the fertility between the rural to urban migrants and the rural non-migrants. This has been done by computing the expected value of the indicator of fertility, namely, children ever born, if migrants had continued to stay in the rural areas. This value is obtained as the predicted value by inserting the
means of socio-economic and demographic variables of the rural to urban migrants in the regression equation for the rural non-migrants in which the fertility indicator is regressed on socio-economic and demographic variables. The results show that the selection effect is high, i.e., if the migrants had not moved to the urban area, their fertility would have been higher than that of rural non-migrants. But the actual fertility is much lower indicating a strong 'adaptation + disruption' effect. A similar comparison with the urban non-migrants showed that if the migrants had been born in the urban area, their fertility would have been close to that of the urban non-migrants i.e. this particular selection effect (selection effect2) is negligible; and actual fertility of migrants is slightly higher, indicating a small 'generation + disruption' effect. The overall effect of 'adaptation + disruption' is greater than the effect of 'generation + disruption'. An attempt made to isolate the disruption effect by using duration of stay at destination as a covariate showed that at early durations of stay (0-4 years) the 'generation + disruption' effect is large, it declines at 5-9 years of duration, and rises at higher durations. This indicates a notable disruption effect which seems to postpone births. The adaptation effect appears to be quite strong and begins at early durations. The generation effect on cumulative fertility is weak and dampens as duration of stay increases. A possible reason for a rapid adaptation is that due to the similarities in language and
culture between places of origin and destination, assimilation with the urban population is easy. Besides, many migrants already had friends and relatives in the urban area. Thus, the adaptation effect seems to be strong and the generation effect quite weak, but some disruption effect is also seen on fertility.

Similar analyses for proximate determinants (age at marriage and contraceptive practice), and indicators of aspirations and values of children showed that for age at marriage, the selection effect is high and positive. In other words, since the migrants differ from the rural stayers in socio-economic characteristics, their age at marriage would have been higher anyway. In addition, there is a notable adaptation effect, that is migration to the urban area raised the age at marriage further. At the same time, the generation effect is also strong. In India, marriages are generally arranged by parents and hence, the influence of parents who reside in the rural areas tends to keep the age at marriage of the migrants lower than that of the urban non-migrants. The effects on contraceptive practice are unclear. Migrants appear to be selected for higher aspirations and lower values of children as compared to the rural areas. But the adaptation and the generation effects on aspirations and values of children are small.
A comparative view of the regression equations of fertility and related indicators on socio-economic and demographic variables in the three groups: rural to urban migrants, rural non-migrants, and urban non-migrants, showed that the equations for the migrants resemble the equations for the urban non-migrants very closely. This indicates that the factors that influence the fertility of migrants are the same as the factors that influence the fertility of the urban non-migrants, and the effects are also of the same order. Thus, the fertility behaviour of the rural to urban migrants is quite similar to that of the urban non-migrants, a finding which supports the adaptation hypothesis.

9.7. CONCLUSIONS

A comparison of the rural to urban migrants with the rural non-migrants (stayers) showed that the migrants had a higher socio-economic status with respect to caste, education, occupation, income and landholding. The study shows that the fertility of the rural to urban migrants was lower than that of the rural population at their places of origin and slightly higher than that of the urban population at their place of destination. Though the migrants were better off than the rural stayers in most social and economic indicators, migration to an urban area itself has caused a fertility decline. The results show that in terms of aspirations about and values of children, the migrants were close to the urban non-migrants than to the rural stayers.
It appears that this is because of the socio-economic conditions of migrants rather than the effect of migration. Thus, migration selects those with near urban values and aspirations. On moving to the urban area, the migrants thus find it easy to assimilate with the urban non-migrants. They seem to adopt urban fertility norms quite early. Though the adaptation effect rises with duration of stay as expected, it is large even at early durations. Thus, the length of stay at the urban place appears to be less important than the event of migration itself. This indicates that the adaptation process did not require much time. This is because most of the rural to urban migrants are from villages within the district itself and also the language and culture of the urbanites are very similar.

For the migrants, the move to the urban area appears to be fairly smooth, most of whom did not face serious problems in getting settled in the town. The married men generally moved with families and so, there was not much cause for separation of spouses. As a result, at least in this kind of migration, disruption incidental to migration was not noticeable. Yet, some disruption effect appears to have operated, perhaps in terms of postponement of births. To sum up, the study supports the selection and adaptation hypotheses, there is some indication of a disruption effect, but the evidence does not support the generation hypothesis except for age at marriage.
9.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the present study, the hypotheses of adaptation, disruption, generation and selection on the effect of migration on fertility were examined by comparing rural to urban migrants with urban non-migrants and also with rural non-migrants. An inclusion of urban to urban migrants and urban to rural migrants would have helped to isolate the effects more explicitly, but this could not be done due to constraints of time and resources. The socialization hypothesis has also not been examined since the present study was small and covered only first generation migrant respondents. Information on first and second generation migrants would allow a closer examination of the socialization hypothesis, but this would be possible only with a large sample.

Another limitation is that information on fertility has been obtained from the husband. Detailed pregnancy histories cannot be generally obtained from husbands and hence some intermediate variables of fertility could not be examined. In particular, it was not possible to see if the pattern of breastfeeding has changed. Information on abortions was also not available. Besides, in the absence of detailed and accurate fertility histories, the estimation of current fertility and of period fertility in time segments was not possible. As a result, the effect of duration on the degree of adaptation could not be examined.
satisfactorily. A larger sample of currently married couples would also allow an estimate of the current fertility (instead of cumulative fertility estimation as done in the study) and permit a more accurate assessment of the disruption effect. The model proposed in Appendix 2 could then be used. Further, if both the husband and wife could be interviewed, it would be possible to obtain complete fertility and marriage histories.

The findings of this study suggest that short distance migrants face few problems in adjustment and are quick to adapt to the environment at the place of destination. These findings differ from those of other studies where migrants were mostly from longer distance and in their case the generation effect was found to be large. A single large study in a metropolitan area, which could include a sufficiently large number of both short distance migrants from the same state and long distance migrants from other states, would provide a better understanding of the migration-fertility linkages.

It should be noted that most of such research would require large samples and greater resources. Population studies in India have not given adequate attention to migration because of the greater concern for population growth and fertility. Now that the fertility transition is almost complete in some major states of India, it is hoped that migration and related issues would draw the
attention of the policy makers. It would then be possible to plan for major surveys addressing issues of migration.

9.9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The process of migration was very smooth for the migrants covered in the study since they had moved only short distances to a major town within district. As a result, they did not have much difficulty in settling down at the new place. Their familiarity with the new place and its residents also facilitated a quick adaptation to the urban environment and adoption of urban fertility behaviour. In India, efforts are being made to develop smaller growth centres as urban areas to take the pressure off the industrialised metropolitan cities. As a result of this, migration would mostly be of short distances within the state. The findings of the study suggest that such a policy would also bring out a change in the fertility behaviour of migrants without the painful migration effect associated with long distant and inter-state movements.