CHAPTER-7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study on fertility and family planning behaviour of Gond couples which have been carried out in Kundam block of Jabalpur has revealed a number of valuable informations which can be useful for health planning for the tribals of Madhya Pradesh. The study which is essentially based on the data collected in randomly selected cluster of tribal villages covering about 2600 households. The unit for the study has been taken as an eligible couple. An eligible has been defined as a couple, where husband and wife living together, wife's age less than 50 years, and has not used in any contraceptive method till the reference date of the survey. The data have been analysed on various characteristics including household characteristics, population characteristics, fertility behaviour and family planning behaviour.

The observations indicated that the studied population mainly belonged to nuclear families (57.1 percent) and the average size of household is around 5 persons. Main occupation of most of the households is agriculture (76.2 percent) and their houses are kuccha type. There is lack of electricity and majority of the population used kerosin lamps as source of light.

It may be mentioned than the average land per household is very low (3.9).
Majority of the head the households are illiterate (72.6 percent) and are engaged in agricultural activities. It shows that the population under study is socially and economically backward.

The characteristics of the population revealed that literacy among the tribals is very low. Less than half (45 percent) males and one fifth of the females (19.7 percent) are illiterate. The population is found to be young. The median age for males (22.5 years) is slightly higher than the females (21.7 years). The sex ratio is favourable to female (1009). The balanced sex ratio depicts that there is no sex specific mortality differentials as observed in the non tribal populations. It is perhaps higher social status of females in the tribal community as observed by various researchers.

The index of aging is too low and young dependents ratio is higher, depicting high fertility and high mortality levels prevailing in the population. Though the indices are lower as compared to rural Madhya Pradesh and rural India. The age at marriage of females which has considerable effect on fertility levels is found to be very low (14.6 years) and about 91.3 percent females found getting married before attaining in legal age of 18 years, which is again makes the population prone to high fertility, high infant mortality and high maternal mortality. The mean age of marriage for males is found to be around 17 years. About 56 percent population are found to be engaged in Agriculture and 14 percent population are engaged in Agricultural labour. The incidence of widowhood is low. It is about 4.8 percent among females and 1.8 percent among the males. Divorced persons are around 1 percent of the total
population. The population is practically non-migratory.

In view of studies conducted by others fertility behaviour of the Gond couples is tested with a number of socio-cultural factors. As mentioned the age at marriage of the females is 15 i.e. around 15 years. Variation in fertility level according to variation in age at marriage are studied. It is observed that when the age at marriage is 12 years the total fertility rate is 5.05 and when the age at marriage is 13-14 years, the total fertility rate is 4.45. Further the level decreased to 4.3 and 4.15 respectively for the ages at marriage 15-16 and 17-18 years. When the age at marriage increased to 19 years i.e. when a female is not permitted to marry before 19 years the total fertility rate is 3.8. Thus the analysis showed that the fertility level reduced to 75 percent when the age at marriage is increased from 12 years to 19 years. It shows a negative co-relation of age at marriage and fertility. These observations are consistent with the findings of the others.

The difference between the average number of children born to the eligible couples when wife is married at 12 years and 13-14 years is not statistically significant but the average number of children born when wife's age at marriage is 15-16 years, 17-18 years and 19+ years compared with wife's age at marriage is 12 years is found to be statistically highly significant.

Education of husband and fertility behaviour has been found negatively associated by the several researchers. The data analysed in this context and compared with the fertility level of wife when the husband is illiterate with those whose husbands were literate. The fertility level
differs significantly. The wives of illiterate husbands had higher fertility.

As mentioned the literacy of females is low in the study population. The fertility behaviour of females according to their literacy level indicated that literacy of women is not significantly associated with the fertility behaviour. It is only husband's literacy which plays significant role in decision making of the tribals.

Several studies have also reported that occupation of husband is found having bearing of fertility in their wives, the data is analysed following two groups of husbands

A. Engaged in Agricultural activities

B. Others.

The analysis indicated those wives whose husbands are engaged in agricultural activities had higher fertility. But the difference is not found statistically significant. Similar observations are observed when the data is analysed according to occupation of wife.

It is observed that the females belonging to joint families had higher fertility compared to those belonging to nuclear households. The total fertility rate in joint household is 4.3 children, compared to 4.1 children in nuclear families. The difference in average number of children born per couple is found statistically significant.

Socio-economic and cultural factors of a population affects family planning decision making of a couple. It depends besides other factors, perception and value of children in the society. Since the tribal people are poor a majority of tribal people still believe that children are assets in financial and other terms. They are near universal desire to
have at least one or two children. It is in this context data is analysed. It is observed that about 31 percent couples are using contraception. It is presumed that information on temporary methods were not reliable, the prevalence of sterilizations is around 29.6 percent. The female sterilization is most popular method observed in the study population is 24.8 percent.

The average age of sterilization is 33.7 years which is quite high and shows most of the couples had adopted sterilization after completing their desired family size. Sterilizations at higher ages i.e. after the age of 30 years has very less significance on lowering the fertility level. It is observed that about 84 percent couples accepted sterilization after having at least three living children. The mean number of living children at the time of sterilization was found 3.8. It is observed that the population had a strong feeling for male children. Most of the couples adopted sterilization after having at least two sons. It appears that a male child is pre-requisite for adopting sterilization which is quite consistent with the findings observed in other populations.

Literacy of wife has been reported as most significant factor in accepting family planning in several studies. From the data of this study it is concluded that literacy of wife has a little role to play in decision making of family planning. There is no significant difference at the mean ages at sterilization for literate and illiterate females and also number of living children before adopting sterilization. Both of the groups of females literate and illiterate had adopted sterilization after having 4 children.

Literacy of husband is also not found associated into the family planning. Though the trend observed showed that the illiterate husband
had adopted family planning after having a slightly higher number (2.65) of children than the illiterate husband (2.33). Similarly the age of acceptance of sterilization of wives of illiterate and literate husband did not differ significantly. They are around 34 years.

Occupation of women also did not find association with the family planning behaviour. The wives who are engaged in agriculture, adopted sterilization after an average of 3.9 children compared in 3.7 children by the wives engaged in Non Agriculture. The mean ages at sterilization for agricultural and non- agricultural group of females are 34 and 35 years. The difference is not found statistically significant. Husbands occupation is found highly associated with the family planning acceptance. Husbands engaged in Agriculture adopted sterilization after having on the average 3.8 children compared to 3.7 children by the husbands engaged in non agricultural activities. The mean ages at sterilization differs significantly. The wives whose husbands are engaged in non agricultural activities accept sterilization at an younger age.

The type of household is not found associated with the family planning behaviour of the Gond couples. Though it is observed that the females belonging to joint households had adopted sterilizations slightly at older ages.

The present study of fertility and family planning carried out in Gond couples indicated that the study population is illiterate, poor, demographically young population, having high fertility and mortality levels. The population has low female age at marriage and this factor perhaps contribute significantly towards high fertility level in the
population. Efforts should be made to increase female age at marriage which may lower considerably the fertility level. Among the other factors occupation of husband and education of husband have considerable association with the fertility levels. No significant association is observed in the literacy and occupation of wife. It is therefore required to increase education level of the females and work participation of the females to make more constructive role in fertility regulation.

Similar observations have been observed regarding family planning behaviour of the couples while literacy of husband and occupation of husband have considerable association with the acceptance of sterilization. Female’s literacy and occupation have not been found significantly associated with the family planning behaviour. Son preference is very high in the population and couples adopted sterilization after having two male children, thereby having at least 4 children born.

In the above context, it appears that the population should be effectively educated regarding perception of family planning, availability of family planning services particularly temporary methods. More effort should be made to catch young couples which are high fertile group and should be motivated for adopting spacing method at younger ages which are likely to improve the health of mother and reduce the infant mortality level in the population. Accordingly PHC services should be reoriented taking into account the difficult terrain, the non-availability of tribal people mostly in day time because of their engagement in collection of livelihood and other prevailing socio-cultural practices. The success of the programme will depend on devotion of the government officials and effective communication of the revelant information to these isolated people.