CHAPTER III

FERTILITY TRENDS - A REVIEW
INTRODUCTION

Fertility measures the rate at which a population adds to itself by births. Human fertility is responsible for biological replacement and for the maintenance of the human society. The growth of the population of the world depends entirely on human fertility. The process of replacement of a group through fertility is a complicated process within the biological limits of human fertility, several social, cultural, psychological, as well as economic and political factors are found to operate and these are responsible for determining the levels and differentials of fertility.

FERTILITY AND MORTALITY

The main factors behind the great increase in population numbers in the country is the continuance of high level of fertility in the face of the declining mortality. High fertility is frequently seen as a functional adjustment to high mortality. When the infant mortality rate is high, parents tend to have large families to offset the possible loss. Such "adjustment is not immediate, however, fertility values are embedded in the
cultural matrix of society, and a cultural lag seems to operate to delaying the adjustment of fertility to changes in mortality" (U.N.E.S.C.O: 1975).

Crude birth rates for more developed and less developed countries during 1950-55 were 22.9 and 42.1 per thousand respectively. The birth rates for more developed and less developed regions during 1975-80 are estimated to be around 16 and 34 per thousand respectively. It is worth noting that the birth rate in the less developed regions of the world is estimated to be more than twice that of the developed regions. It is apparent that the various regions and countries fall into two neat groups with respect to levels of fertility, with the countries in the developed regions having crude birth rates which are lower than 25 per thousand population on the one side and the countries in the developing regions having crude birth rates above 25 per thousand population on the other. From the above it is observed that crude birth rates are still high in the regions of South Asia, Middle South Asia and Western South Asia. On the other hand, lower birth rates are observed for developed regions. Another striking point is that between 1950-55 and 1975-80, the crude birth rates of the world has registered a decline of 6.7 points, that is, 16.03 per cent. It is however, worth noting
that during the same period the developed regions experienced a reduction of 7.5 points, that is, 31.88 per cent, whereas this reduction for the developing regions was 8.5 points, that is, 20.19 per cent (Asha A Bhande and Tara Kanitkar 1984).

Number of factors, may however, contribute to the level of fertility. Some of these factors increase fertility while others decrease it. In every society, both the positive as well as negative factors operate in combination, resulting in changing levels of fertility. The important factors affecting fertility may be discussed for clear understanding of influence fertility on population growth.

FERTILITY AND SOCIAL FACTORS

It is likely that group fertility levels vary generally in relation to social factors. According to Kingsby Davis "Fertility, mortality and migration are all to a greater extent are socially determined and socially determining. They are the inner of former variables in the demographic system, whereas the outer or ultimate variables are sociological and biological. Whenever the demographer pushes his enquiry to the point of asking why the demographic processes behave as they do, he enters
the social field" (1936). Thus, sociological studies of the institution of marriage, family and religions and moral values are associated with the universal human experience of birth, illness and death.

It has been observed that the levels and patterns of fertility vary considerably in various sub-groups of the same population. These sub-groups may be 'based on residence, whether urban or rural, social and economic status in terms of educational attainment, occupation income, size of land holding, religion, caste, race etc.' (Asha A Bhende and Tara Kanitkar: 1985). Ronald Freedman observes that 'differential fertility refers to variation in fertility among significant sub-groups in a population. In principle, almost any classification of the population may be basis for measuring fertility differences. Such groups frequently are distinctive in social norms and cultural traits affecting fertility' (1962).

**Education:**

Education attainment can act as important modernising force in extending the horizon of general awareness of people, in exposing them to modern ideas, and developing rational thinking patterns for planning and decision making.
Age at Marriage and Fertility:

Raising the age at marriage is seen by demographers to be one of the relatively few policy alternatives 'beyond family planning' that might be able to initiate or accelerate population growth changes on a major scale (Rafiquil Huda Chaudhury: 1982). Since the days of Malthus considerable interest has been generated in studying the relationship between age at marriage and marital frequency on the one hand, and marital fertility on the other hand. Of the nuptiality variables, age at marriage and proportion of persons over married accounting for variations in fertility level among different societies.

The influence of age at marriage, according to Agarwala, acts in two ways: first through a shortening of the reproductive span by about five years, and secondly, through the shift in the fertility pattern towards fewer children in a woman's later years, partly attributable to factors like education and modernisation (1965).

Son Preference and Fertility:

Son preference is considered to be an important factor in contributing to the high desired family size norm, consequently leading to high fertility, particularly in the developing countries of Asia. In agrarian societies, particularly patriarchal ones, sons provide the family
labour, and eventually assume responsibility for the household and for running the farm, they are also expected to assume the responsibility for parents in old age, as daughters usually marry out and are less likely to provide financial support.

A recent survey conducted by Chaudhury and Latif (1975) among male heads of households in Bangladesh found that a hundred per cent of the respondents considered a son is an economic asset, while none expressed such an expectation from daughters. Freedman and Coombs (1974) employing various measures of sex preference found consistently higher evidence of son preference among respondents in Korea, Taiwan, Delhi and India as a whole but found no consistent pattern in Calcutta, rural East Java, Thailand and West Malaysia. Arnold et al., (1973) also found higher evidence of son preference in Korea and Taiwan but not in the Philippines. It is also interesting to note that within the same country i.e., India, evidence of son preference varied greatly.

**Sex Attitudes and Practices:**

In societies where 'moral are the private affairs rather than social concern' there will be many illegitimate births but is not necessary that overall fertility may be high.
Family Structure and Fertility:

The fertility level of a society is expected to be influenced by its dominant family structure. It is usually hypothesized that nuclear family and household structures promote lower fertility than extended or joint household structures. In the developing countries, the great majority of people still live in extended families. The controversial theory of family structure and fertility has generated a lot of empirical studies, particularly at the individual level i.e., using the individual women and her affiliation in a particular family type. However, the findings of studies are inconclusive. Some studies have found nuclear structures to be associated with lower fertility (Freedman et al., 1964; Liv: 1967; Karkal: 1972; Palmore: 1972), while others have found the opposite, or little or no relationship, between them (Nag: 1967; Pakrashi and Malakar: 1967; Mosena and Steckel: 1972; Karim: 1974 and De Vries: 1976).

Female Status and Fertility:

The status of women and their role in community and family decision making, including the timing and number of births and choice of contraception, have an important bearing on improving the standard of living, the success of family planning and a long-term reproduction in the fertility
level of a country. In a society whose women depend on their children for social and economic security and lack of legitimate alternatives to child bearing, fertility is higher (Rafiqul Huda Chaudhury: 1982).

FERTILITY AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Religion, Caste, Race and Fertility:

Religion is considered to be an important factor affecting fertility. The injunctions laid down in various religions indicate the importance of fertility. From the studies of fertility behaviour of various religion groups, it was observed that the Muslims had a higher fertility rate than the Hindus or the Christians. In the pre-independence India, the fertility of Muslims was about 15 per cent higher than that of Hindus.

As caste is an important indicator of social status in India, attempts have been made to study fertility differentials by caste. In a study conducted in Lucknow city, it was observed that upper caste Hindus had, on an average of 3.8 live births, while the lower caste Hindus had, on an average of 4.1 live births (Samana D.N.: 1973).
ECONOMIC FACTORS AND FERTILITY

Occupation of Husband and Fertility:

Some studies show that fertility differs according to the occupation of husband. In India some studies have tried to investigate the relationship between the occupation of husband and fertility. It was generally observed that the wives of those engaged in professional jobs had the lowest fertility. In some studies it was found that cultivators and labourers had, on an average, 7.4 children and those who reported their occupation as service and those who were professionals had, on an average of 6.6 children.

Employment of Women and Fertility:

Gainful employment of women outside home is found to be inversely related to fertility according to a number of studies conducted in many parts of the world (Gendell et al.: 1970; Ridley: 1969; Waller and Sly: 1971; Hear and Turner: 1963). This relationship has been found to be more pronounced in the industrialised than in developing countries, and in urban than in rural areas. In the Indianapolis study, wife's work history was one of the few variables strongly correlated with planned status and fertility (Freedman: 1961). Freedman et al. (1963) show
that an inverse relationship clearly exists between duration of work and fertility. Gedell et al. (1970) in a study in Guatemala city, notice that economically active women have considerably lower fertility than inactive fertility. However, data obtained from Latin America and Turkey do not support the above hypothesis (Styree: 1965; Stueso and Weller: 1967). In India this variable is yet to assume importance in view of the very high rate of illiteracy prevailing among women, lack of employment opportunities and customs of women. The Mysore study (U.N. 1963) indicates that women working outside home is still not customary among the higher socio-economic groups, and those who work usually do so out of economic necessity.

Income Levels and Fertility:

Increased income is not sufficient condition for rapid economic growth and decline in fertility. Researchers have also brought out that fertility decline is more sensitive to change in income distribution than are changes in per capita income. Although the family planning programme gives equal opportunity to both the rich as well the poor, to have smaller families, it is the rich who have favourably utilized services for limiting fertility. There is a possibility of fertility reduction even with a
slow economic growth rate. Equal distribution of incomes will perhaps lead to an overall decline in fertility. In India it can be seen that states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa whose per capita income is low or moderate, but where income distribution is even exhibit low fertility. On the other hand, states like Punjab, Gujarat and Assam where per capita income is higher but income distribution is uneven, have high fertility. Agarwala has rightly pointed out that reduction of an additional one or two per cent of Gross National Product of the lower income group may be sufficient to bring down their fertility.

ECOLOGICAL FACTOR AND FERTILITY

The fertility rates of various regions may differ widely. The fertility round of 1971-72 conducted by the sample registration scheme indicated that there are wide variations in fertility levels from region to region. In India rural, urban fertility differentials in 1951 recorded were smaller. After 1951, urban fertility was found to be more or less consistently lower than rural fertility. These differentials, however, have become more pronounced in recent years.
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