

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The major objective of this study was to examine the status of women and its influence on fertility behaviour among working and non-working women. This chapter contains the summary of the major findings of the study besides making certain suggestions which may be of some use for policy members. Data for the present study was collected from a total sample of 400 respondents - 200 working women and 200 non-working women, from Tirupati town of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. For the selection of working population first women working in different institutions were listed out. From this list, a sample of 200 women were selected randomly. For the selection of non-working women, first all of nineteen wards of Tirupati town were listed out. From this list, two wards were selected randomly. Then all eligible women of these two wards were listed out. From this list, a sample of 200 women were selected randomly. Another criteria used for selecting both the categories of respondents was that they should be currently married in the reproductive age group (15-49 years) and should have one or more living children. Data collection was completed by interview method using a detailed schedule. Suitable statistical techniques were adopted for analysing the data and drawing inferences.

The variations in fertility are highly significant between the working women and non-working women. The fertility of working women was significantly low compared to the high fertility of non-working women. The average number of live-births of the working women was 2.36 and the non-working women 3.01. Similar differential trend in their 'expected additional births' and in their ideal family size, norms was also noticed. This study has confirmed that certain major variables relating to levels and differentials of fertility influence the fertility behaviour, in different degrees, among the working and non-working women.

FERTILITY LEVELS AND DIFFERENTIALS

Age at Marriage:

A negative relationship existed between age at marriage of women and fertility among both the working and non-working women. The trend was more pronounced in the case of working women. The mean number of live-births for both the working and non-working women married at the age of 14 years or below was significantly lower than those married at the age of 30 years and above.

Female employment outside home requires prolonged schooling which makes women to postpone their marriages. Therefore, status of women influences fertility behaviour through age at marriage directly and indirectly. Mere

enactment of legislation for raising age at marriage may not be effective unless it is accompanied by other measures that increase the over-all status of women.

Duration of Marriage

Duration of marriage is the another important variable which significantly explains the variations in fertility. In the present study also a positive relationship was found between the duration of marriage and fertility among the working and non-working women. The mean number of live-births for the working and non-working women. The mean number of live-births for the working and non-working women, whose effective marital duration was four years or below was 1.16 and 1.47 respectively, which were increased to 3.94 and 4.82 respectively, when their duration of marriage was raised to 20 years and above. Thus, we may conclude that wife's effective marital duration showed a positive influence on fertility. It is, therefore, better to reduce wife's marital duration through increasing their ages at marriage. If we increase the women's ages at marriage it will decrease their effective marital duration which in turn decreases the fertility.

Educational

Educational level of women emerged as one of the strongest factors affecting fertility behaviour. A

negative association between educational level of women and fertility was existing among both the working and non-working women. Among the working category, women with secondary education had on average 2.85 live-births compared to the women with university education who had 2.04 live-births. But mean number of live-births for the non-working illiterate women was 3.45 as against 2.58 for literate women.

Education is a precondition for increased status of women which, in turn, depresses fertility. Therefore, steps should be taken to universalise female education particularly in rural India. National Adult Education Programme currently being implemented in India may go a long way in changing the general attitude towards female education. Mid-day meal programme that was recently started in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, it is hoped, will have encouraging impact on school enrolment particularly where school enrolment is low.

Occupation

The effect of education is likely to depend on activities other than child-bearing. Therefore, greater the participation of women in the paid labour force, lower was their fertility. The working women, who were engaged outside the home had relatively low

fertility than non-working women who were fully engaged in household maintenance. The mean number of live-births for non-working women was 3.01. Among the working women, who were engaged in low status work have had more number of live-births than the women who were high status employees. The mean number of live-births for teachers, who were low status employees was 3.03 and it was reduced to 1.94 for lecturers who were high status employees. Thus, it may be concluded that higher the participation of women outside the home lower will be the fertility. Therefore, changes in the status and roles of women which give them more independence and take them out of their homes may bring changes in family function. One such change might be from the extended family with power vested in the mother-in-law to a nuclear family with more freedom in many matters. Perhaps more important, changes in the roles of women through employment might change the dynamics of the marital relationship, encouraging women to have fairly equal voice in family decisions, especially fertility decisions.

Caste:

Caste is a major socio-cultural determinant of fertility. In this study also, caste status is inversely

associated with fertility level. Caste differentials in fertility are expected to disappear when the opportunities are provided for lower caste women to go up in the social ladder. Therefore, the present policy of encouragement in education and employment for the lower caste people should be continued.

Type of Marriage:

Generally, it is believed that people who marry their uncles and cross-cousins will have high fertility compared to those who marry the unrelated persons. Although, the data in this study do not fully confirm this hypotheses due to smaller sample size; the observed trend is that the women marrying relatives show higher fertility than others. It is worthwhile to undertake a large scale study in this direction.

Income:

Income is a major variable of socio-economic status which invariably affects fertility behaviour. There exists a negative relationship between income and fertility in the present study for both the working and non-working women. However, the income differentials in fertility are significant only among the non-working women. It may be therefore inferred that income differentials in fertility will disappear as a consequence of increased status of women. Therefore, it is

very important to raise the income levels through education and employment opportunities.

MODERNISATION AND FERTILITY

DOWRY

It is interesting to note that the mean number of live-births for the women who have given dowry in their marriages is slightly more than the women who have not given dowry in their marriages among the working and non-working women. These differentials in fertility were more pronounced among the non-working women as compared to working women. It appears that those who cannot afford to give dowry may exhibit lower fertility. The dowry system admittedly is an evil in the society and more realistic and effective steps have to be taken to eradicate this evil.

Aspiration for Daughter's Education

The constitution of India has bestowed upon women the privilege of equal rights with men, in all walks of life. But the bulk of Indian women were deprived of this been mainly because of mass illiteracy. The method of raising aspirations has been considered as an index of modernisation and social change. This study shows that the level of aspiration is higher among working women as compared to non-working women. The working women showed higher aspiration to educate their

daughters as compared to non-working women. It may be possible that as daughters get higher education and become more of an economic asset than a burden to the parents, the present strong preference for male child may diminish and it may lead to low fertility.

Opinion on Daughter's Age at Marriage:

With a view to understand the demographic perspectives and planning of working and non-working women, the respondents were asked to state their opinion on the ages preferred for their daughters' marriages. While more than half of working women indicated 20 years and over, the non-working women preferred lower ages (less than 20 years) of marriage.

It is also interesting to note that the women who wanted to perform their daughters' marriage only after completion of required schooling exhibit significantly lower fertility than the women who wanted early marriages for their daughters. Therefore, an increase in the status of women affects not only their own fertility but also it influences the future fertility behaviour of the offsprings.

Selection of Husband:

Most of the marriages in India are arranged marriages. However, marital freedom is very much linked with economic independence. Data in this study partially

support this hypothesis. The proportion who have married according to their choice constituted about 24 per cent among the working women while the corresponding figure for non-working women was only 10 per cent.

DECISION-MAKING AND FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR

Intra-spouse communication:

Husband and wife communication is an important aspect of household economic and demographic planning. One of the important ways through which status of women influences fertility behaviour is the intra-spouse communication which was higher among the working women as compared to non-working. It is also confirmed that the working women with better intra-spouse communication showed lower fertility than non-working women. Therefore, it is clear that any strategy that is aimed at increasing status of women indirectly promotes husband-wife communication, a pre-requisite for socio-economic and demographic change.

Freedom of Action:

One of the important determinants of status of women is the freedom of action. It is evident from the study working women enjoy more freedom as compared to non-working women. This study has confirmed the hypothesis that females with less freedom of action in

different fields of life and consequently manifesting low status, have relatively high fertility in comparison to those females who have more freedom of action. From this, we may conclude that changing roles of the women in the society through education and employment will increase their position and status in the home as well as in society. Status will increase freedom in very field of life which in turn may reduce their fertility.

Decision-Making:

Another important correlate of status of women is the authority of decision-making. Present study supports the hypothesis that women who have high status will have normally high influence on decision-making in almost every field of family life. In the present study, females who have high influence on decision-making have had less fertility as compared to women who have less influence on decision-making. It may be concluded, thus, that the women's role in decision-making has negative influence on fertility behaviour.

Family Planning Behaviour:

Contraceptive use is the most important proximate determinant of fertility. Higher status of women increases the knowledge of contraception besides creating the demand for contraception. Data showed

that more than half of the working women (59 per cent) were practising different types of contraceptive methods as against only about 40 per cent of the non-working women. The major method accepted in two groups was female sterilisation; over thirty per cent of both working and non-working women have adopted tubectomy while only 16 per cent of the husbands of working women and 3.5 per cent of non-working women have adopted vasectomy. A very negligible proportion of couples in two groups have accepted IUD, oral pill, condom, rhythm and abstinence. Although provision of contraceptive services is one of the important means of bringing down family size, the contraceptive methods are not effective enough to curtail fertility rate.

The success of the programmes directed at improving the status and broadening the roles of women leading to fertility reduction will depend among other on

- i) training and employment for women on a wider scale;
- ii) improving women's educational levels especially through non-formal educational programmes;
- iii) undertaking effective measures to implement the legislation on age at marriage, law of inheritance, access to contraceptive information and services;
- iv) changing the traditional image and definitions of women as wife and mother through appropriate action programmes and

finally educate men and women, both working and non-working to believe firmly in small-family norm and act wisely.