Family Size Preferences and Decision making Process in Orissa, India

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Information regarding the potential demand for family planning shows that the desire to have more children has decreased in India over the period. In poor economy, on the one hand, children are valued for their contribution to food production and other household related activities while on the other hand they are valued less because of the opportunity cost and cost attached to raise them. Further, in agricultural settings, lower productivity from the land results in lower household income, which in turn decreases the demand for children because household can no longer provide for as many children. Thus the desired family size is based on a compulsive choice of the optimal size of the family and this choice is based on a long term evaluation of their economic aspirations and on the perceived costs and benefits of having children (Cochrane *et al.,* 1990). This can be accomplished when the concerned individual has knowledge about family planning measures and by implication exercises some control over the fertility related decisions. It is expected that an individual belonging to such a society will come forward with definite numeric response regarding the desired family size.

The determinants of desired family size is also expected to be guided by respondent's economic circumstances and perceived costs and benefits related with children. Moreover, the desired family size is related with completed family size, not only at the time they make decisions regarding the number of children they desire or born but also on their expectations regarding variables which will be consistent with their decision making in future. Earlier research has identified that the decision of parents to have a subsequent baby is influenced by their caste, religion, education, place of residence, economic condition of the household, occupation, number of existing children and sex of each child born and so on. These factors influence the parents demand for subsequent births and prompt couples to change their reproductive goals during their child bearing periods (Lee, 1980). Because of its importance, the present study illuminates about the family size preferences, preference for desired family size and to identify the factors

likely to affect desired fertility and finally factors influencing the decision making process in fertility in Orissa.

Orissa has attracted the attention of population scientists due to lowest growth rate of population and rapid fertility decline during the last decade. The rate of growth of population during 1991-2001 was 16.25 percent as against 21.54 percent at all India (India, Registrar General, 2004). The CBR has declined in the state from 34.6 in 1971 to 21.5 in 2006 and the TFR has declined from 4.7 to 2.5 during the same period (India, Registrar General, 2006). The decline in fertility has occurred in a peculiar demographic regime. In spite of having relatively large proportion of backward population (16.5 percent population belonging to scheduled caste and 22.1 percent population belonging to scheduled tribe, according to 2001 census), higher level of infant mortality (71 per 1000 live births), high level of malnutrition and high poverty (two fifth of the population live under below poverty line), low female literacy rate (50.5 percent in 2001), primarily agrarian economy (only 65 percent of workers in Orissa are engaged in activities related to agriculture), dominant rural population (only 15 percent, of population of the state live in urban areas) fertility has declined remarkably. With this paradox, the present study attempt to explore the factors of family size preferences and desired family size and finally explores the factors of decision making process in Orissa.

Data for the present study is drawn from secondary sources i.e. Census, Sample Registration System (SRS) and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) I (1992-93), NFHS II (1998-99) and NFHS III (2005-06) to get clear picture of fertility decline and fertility preferences in Orissa. Besides primary data have been used for the investigation of factors responsible for desired family size; decision making process in the familial set up and so on. Of the 30 districts in Orissa one district i.e. Nayagarh was selected for the study considering with low fertility and middle level of development. Data are collected from 500 eligible male (currently married and in the 21-54 age group) members of the household from 10 villages for interview using Interview-schedule. Two reasons dictate the choice of males as respondents. Firstly, the researcher would find it easier to interview males than females and second, males (or husbands) play a major role in

decision making on fertility regulation (Muller, 1972). The bi-variate analysis has been used to see the gross effect of predictor variables on response variable. For the multivariate analysis, the statistical techniques used in this study are Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) and logistic regression technique. MCA is also used to study the mean number of children desired, which guides us to the possible direction of fertility preference in the sampled areas. Logistic regression technique is employed to explore the net influences of various variables on fertility preferences and decision making process in Orissa.

The result demonstrated that, till mid 80's the decline in fertility was stalled in Orissa but the process of fertility transition was reasonably consistent and the CBR and TFR started falling substantially after mid 80's. Such decline in an extremely backward state is quite remarkable.

The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents who want or do not want additional children in future provide some indication of family preference. It is clearly evident that the desire to stop child bearing increases rapidly with the number of living children (Table 1). The nine percent of women in Orissa in NFHS III with no living children say they do not want any children (the woman or her husband is sterilized or the woman says she wants no more children), which is substantially higher compared to all India figure (only 3 percent). The same proportion goes to 39, 84 and 94 percent for women with one, two and three living children respectively in Orissa in NFHS III compared to 28, 83 and 90 percent for all India figure. This suggests that the desire to stop child bearing is rampant in Orissa even at the low parities. Rapid changes in fertility preferences since NFHS I show that, the percentage of women with no living child who say they want no more children has increased substantially (from 4.6 percent to 8.9 percent). Such percentage of women with one living child got more than doubled from 19 percent to 39 percent. The percentage with two living children who want no more, increased from 65 percent to 84 percent, indicating increasing acceptance of a two-child family in Orissa.

Multiple classification analysis shows that caste, educational level, standard of living of the household, exposure to mass media and number of living son are important determinants of desire family size. The analysis also shows that decision about the number of children is affected in case of only one-fifth of the respondents in the hypothetical circumstances if the family income increases to double, if govt. provides free education to all children up to/including college and if govt. provides free ration to all children. This proves that in spite of widespread poverty in the state the economic provision of the government is not a precondition for the decision of number of children.

The result shows that the thresholds have fallen because of the changing value of children and cost of raising them has increased and child participation in work force has decreased. Such changes have occurred because of speedier diffusion of ideas. It is also found that family planning programme has been successful in modifying norms and popularizing fertility regulation and contraceptive use. In a negative way, poverty have induced fertility decline.

References:

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Table 1: Percentage of Currently married fecund women wanting no more children by number and sex of living children in Orissa, NFHS I, II and III

Number and sex of living children	NFHS I	NFHS II	NFHS III
No Child	4.6	2.6	8.9
One Child	18.6	23.0	39.1
No Son	16.1	18.1	29.2
1 Son	20.7	27.2	48.0
Two Children	65.2	71.9	84.1
No Son	37.3	37.1	55.6
1 Son	68.3	76.7	88.8
2 Sons	77.3	83.2	91.0
Three Children	82.6	89.6	93.7
No Son	29.5	52.9	66.1
1 Son	75.3	86.8	91.1
2 Sons	96.4	97.6	99.4
3 Sons	88.1	93.0	97.1
4+ Children	92.1	94.8	95.9
No Son	62.2	78.9	71.0
1 Son	87.6	91.2	93.0
2 Sons	95.2	97.1	99.1
3+ Sons	94.7	96.2	98.6
Total	59.5	64.7	71.5
N	2166	2623	2297

Note: Women who have been sterilized or whose husbands have been sterilized are considered to want no more children.
Source: Computed from NFHS I, II and III individual data files.