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## A Study on Attitude towards Family Size Preferences

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### **Abstract:**

*Family size is a matter of great importance not only for the country as a whole but also for the welfare and health of the individual, the family and the community. Our country has adopted the goal of universalizing two-child family norm. The achievement of this goal will have consequences both at the micro level i.e. level of individuals and family as well as at the macro level i.e. for the nation as a whole. The study is aimed to assess attitude towards family size preferences among female students in Annamalai University. A sample of 100 respondents was randomly selected. Personal interview method was used for data collection and analysis was done using tools such as frequency, mean and percent. The result revealed that majority of respondents (59%) had preferred 2 children as maximum required number for children per family. It has been observed that majority of 76percent of the respondents had preferred small family size (2 children). It is essential to bring more awareness among female students by introducing population education in the school curriculum and inculcating knowledge on problems of high growth of population among the younger people.*

### **1. Introduction**

Family size is a matter of great importance not only for the country as a whole but also for the welfare and health of the individual, the family and the community. Our country has adopted the goal of universalizing two-child family norm. The achievement of this goal will have consequences both at the micro level i.e. level of individuals and family as well as at the macro level i.e. for the nation as a whole. India has made significant progress in various developmental sectors since independence but the fruits of these developments have not reached to major segments of the poor. One important reason for this is that many of these gains have been neutralized by the rapid growth of the population. The country does not have the resources to bring about a radical qualitative improvement in the lives of hundreds of millions and at the same time to provide to millions more. India is one of the developing countries who identified family planning as basic to development. Family planning is an integral part of the package of health, nutrition and health education. In the recent past, country has noticed a rapid fertility decline at the aggregate level (NFHS-2, 1998-99).

Research studies have indicated that the only factor which is invariably associated with lower fertility is the educational status of the wife. In India too, the findings of several studies indicate that the educational status of women is associated negatively with fertility. (Agarwala, 1969).

Kingsley Davis(1970) points out that planned parenthood approach would reduce reproduction only to the extent that unwanted births would be eliminated, which may still result in a high rate of population growth, especially in developing countries He argues that motivation for smaller families depends on changes in the family structure, in the position of women and in sexual mores

In oriental agrarian societies, the higher value placed upon sons than daughters probably arise not only from the presumed economic advantages of sons to parents but also from considerations of religion and social prestige. It is therefore, not uncommon for a couple to go on having children till at least one son is born. Research evidence is available through several studies to show that Indian couples desire and hope to have, not one, but at least two sons.<sup>2</sup>. Such a situation cannot be remedied unless the status of women in society is improved. (Asha Bhende,2006).

The family welfare programme in India is recognized as a priority area, and is being implemented as a 100% centrally sponsored programme. It was felt that reduction in population pressure could only be achieved through adoption of small family norms. It can be achieved through the process of enhancing knowledge, persuasion, facilitation and people participation, so that they perceive a small family to be primarily in their personal and family interest. Various factors affect family planning and different techniques (Kumar et. al., 2011). Education and mass-media exposure play an important role in changing the mindset of people on any aspect. Hence, the present investigation was undertaken to study the impact of education and media exposure on adoption of small family norms in the scheduled castes families.

Adoption of small family norms is today not only desirable but necessity. It has become difficult to survive with a large family particularly because of rising prices, growing needs and necessities. One has to spend a lot on food, clothing and even on education. With scarce employment opportunities it is difficult to manage a large family. The actions of an individual are governed to a great extent by his attitudes. One cannot see attitudes directly but are inferred indirectly through the actions and words of a person. Attitudes have a powerful influence on one's behavior.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- To understand the socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents.
- To examine their attitude towards family size preference.

## 3. Materials and Methods

For this study by adopting simple random sampling technique 100 respondents were selected. The respondents were the female students of arts faculty in Annamalai University. The data required for the study was collected using a detailed survey schedule through personal interview with the respondents. After the field survey, all the schedules were thoroughly scrutinized to check the inconsistencies in responses and were edited. Then all the data collected were coded and entered into the computer and processed to get the required tables, and analysis was done through tools such as frequency, percent and mean.

<b>Social characteristics of respondents</b>	
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Rural	63
Urban	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Single	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Christian	81
Muslim	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family type</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Nuclear	77
Joint	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family size</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
3-4	35
5-6	48
7-8	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Father's education</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Primary	30
Secondary	46
Degree	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Economic characteristic of respondents</b>	
<b>Father's occupation</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Farmer	38
Labourer	20
Business	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Annual family income</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
30,000-60,000	19
60,000-90,000	48
90,000-1,20,000	10
1,20,000-1,50,000	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Receiving any financial aid</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Loan scholarship	8
Parents	62
Relatives	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Demographic characteristic of respondents</b>	
<b>Current age</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
20-24	38
25-29	40
30-34	13
35-39	9

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Birth order</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
1	12
2	28
3	22
4	13
5	15
6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

- Average household size = 5.1
- Mean annual income =Rs 86,100
- Mean age= 26.7years
- Average birth order=3. 2

Regarding social characteristics, it has been observed from the above table that majority of ( 63 %) the respondents were having rural residence while 37 percent were having urban residence. Regarding marital status, all the respondents (100%) were unmarried. Regarding religion, it is evident that majority of the respondents (81%)were Christians while 19 percent of them were muslims. Regarding family type of the respondents, it has been observed that majority of them (77%) were living in nuclear family while only 19 percent were living in joint family. It has been noticed that 48 and 35 percent of the respondents were belonged to the family size of 5 to 6 and 3to 4 respectively, while 17 percent of them were belonged to the family size of 7 to 8.The mean family size is found to be 5.Regarding father 'education, it has been observed that 46 and 30 percent of the respondents had studied up to secondary & primary level respectively, while 24 percent were degree holders.

Regarding economic characteristics, it has been found that 42 percent and 38 percent of fathers were business men and farmers respectively, while 20 percent were labourers. Regarding family annual income it has been observed that 48 percent of the respondents belonged to the income group of Rs 60,000-90,000 while 23 percent and 19 percent were belonged to the income group of Rs.1,20,000 -1,50,000 and Rs 30,000-60,000 respectively . The remaining 10 percent of them belonged to Rs 90,000-1,20,000 income group. The mean annual income is found to be Rs. 86,100. Regarding the support of any financial aid, it has been observed that 62 percent and 30percent of respondents had got support from their parents and relatives respectively and only 8 percent of them had got scholarship.

Regarding demographic characteristics, it has been observed that 38 percent and 40 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 20-24 years and 25-29 years respectively, while 13 percent and 9 percent were in the age group of 30-34 years and 35-39 years respectively. The mean age of respondent is found to be 27 years. Regarding birth order, 28 and 22 percent of respondents were in the order of 2 and 3 respectively, while 10 and 15 percent of them were in the order of 4 and 6. The remaining 12 percent were in the first birth order. The Mean birth order is found to be 3.

<b>Opinion of respondents on number of children for a family</b>	
<b>Minimum no. of children</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
1	63
2	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Maximum no. of children</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
2	59
3	25
4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Optimum no. of children</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
2	53
3	37
4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family size preference</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Small family(2 children)	76
Large family(3 and above)	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Opinion on sex wise child preference</b>	
<b>Preferring at least one male child</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Yes	27
No	73

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Preferring at least one female child</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
Yes	22
No	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Suggestions on age at marriage for females</b>	
<b>Minimum age of marriage for female</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
18-20	24
21-23	33
24-26	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Maximum age of marriage for female</b>	<b>No of respondents/percent</b>
30-32	78
33-35	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by their attitude towards family size

Regarding attitude towards family size, it has been observed from the table no.2 that 63 percent of the respondents had stated 1 child as minimum required number for a family whereas 37 percent of them had stated 2 children as minimum required number for a family. For maximum number of children, it has been observed that 59 percent of respondents had stated 2 children as maximum required number for a family while 25 and 16 percent of them had stated 3 and 4 children as maximum required number for a family. Regarding optimum number of children, it has been found that 53 percent of respondents had stated 2 children as optimum number per family while 37 and 10 percent of them had stated 3 and 4 children respectively as optimum number for a family. Regarding opinion on family size, majority (76%) of the respondents had preferred small family size (2children), while 24 percent had preferred large family size(3and above). Regarding opinion on preference for male and female children, it has been observed that more than 70 percent of the respondents had not shown preference for either male or female children.

Regarding Suggestions on the minimum and maximum age at marriage for females, it is evident that 43 percent and 33percent of respondents had suggested 24to26years and 21 to 23 years respectively, whereas 24 percent of them had suggested 18 to 20 years as minimum age at marriage for females. Majority of (78%) the respondents had suggested 30-32 years as maximum age of marriage for females while 22 percent of them had suggested of 33-35 years as maximum age of marriage for females.

#### 4. Conclusion

It has been concluded from the above analysis that majority (63%) the respondents were living in rural area, majority of them (80%) were Christians and majority of the respondents (77%) were belonged to nuclear family .The mean family size is found to be 5.The mean annual family income is found to be Rs 86,100.The mean age of the respondent is found to be 27 years. The mean birth order of the respondents is found to be 3.

It has been found that majority of respondents (63%) preferred 1 child as minimum required number for a family. Majority of 59 percent had preferred 2 children as maximum required number for a family. Regarding family size, it has been found that majority of 76 percent had preferred small family size (2 children). Majority of the respondents (70 to 80%) were not showing preference for either male or female children. Majority of the respondents had suggested 21 to 26 years for minimum age at marriage. For maximum age at marriage, majority (78%) of them had suggested 30 to 32 years of age.

It becomes evident that since majority of the respondents (62%) belonged to high age group >25 years and are undergoing higher education, their preference for small family size is quite satisfactory. Hence it has been suggested to improve the status of woman to higher level and also to introduce population education in the school curriculum to inculcate knowledge on problems of high growth of population among the younger people and also it becomes necessary to increase the awareness of family welfare measures to bring about reduction in family size in future among young generation.

#### 5. References

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