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Demographic Profile of Backward Caste Population in Rural Uttar Pradesh

Introduction

BACKWARD castes constitute about one fourth of the total population of Uttar Pradesh. This group of Castes has its own peculiar tradition and belief which may be responsible for its own demographic behaviour. So, it becomes our first and foremost duty to know about their current demographic behaviour which will be helpful for their economic and social uplift. Therefore, this study is an attempt to understand their demographic behaviour attitudes and awareness about family planning programme through the following socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

1. Educational level
2. Occupation
3. Monthly income
4. Age at Effective marriage
5. Number of children considered ideal, by sex
6. Knowledge of family planning methods
7. Opinion about abortion
8. Suggestions about family planning incentives.

Methodology

Two hundred respondents from the backward castes (i.e. Ahir, Bhar; Bhat; Barhi; Bhujua; Dhunia, Gujar, Gadariya, Jat, Kahar; Kewat; Kachhi; Kumhar,

Lohar; Mali; Nai; Suanar; Tamoli and Teli) have been selected by random sampling in District Saharanpur of Uttar Pradesh. The study was conducted during July to October 1979-80.

It is interesting to note that a few of the respondents had hesitated in responding to the inquiry. However, when the help of local leaders was enlisted most of the respondents took keen interest.

Main Findings

A, Educational Level More than one fourth of the respondents are illiterate while another fourth had a matriculation or a higher level of education. The rest included literates without schooling or those who had completed basic and junior school level education. (See Table 1)

TABLE 1—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR EDUCATION

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Percentage Distribution (N = 200)</i>
1. Illiterate	26.3
2. Literate without formal schooling	15.2
3. Below Primary	10.5
4. Primary/Junior	23.0
5. Matric and above	25.0
— Total —	— 100.0 —

B, Occupational Distribution. From the occupational distribution of respondents given in Table 2, it will be seen that the largest group forming 42.5 percent

TABLE 2—PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Percentage Distribution (N = 200)</i>
1. Owner cultivator	42.5
2. Market labour	17.3
3. Agriculture Labour	11.4
4. Service	14.6
5. Crafts man/ Artisans	12.2
6. No specific occupation	2.0
Total	100.0

of me total was formed by owner cultivators. The bulk of the remaining included market labourers, those in service, artisans and agricultural labourers.

C. *Monthly Income Distribution.* Income distribution in Table 3 shows' that 2-3 percent of the respondents has monthly incomes below Rs. 100, while TABLE 3—PERCENTAGE

TABLE 3—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR MONTHLY INCOME LEVEL

Monthly Income (in Rs.)	Percentage Distribution (N = 200)
1. 50 to 99	2.3
2. 100 to 149	4.5
3. 150 to 199	7.2
4. 200 to 249	12.5
5. 250 to 299	15.3
6. 300 to 349	26.2
7. 350 to 399	17.0
8. 400 and above	15.0
Total	100.0

other 15 percent had incomes higher than Rs. 400 per month. The concentration of respondents in the income range of 200-400 is quite heavy.

D. *Age at Effective Marriage.* As seen from Table 4, about half of total male

TABLE 4—AGE AT EFFECTIVE MARRIAGE FOR MALE RESPONDENTS AND THEIR WIVES

Age at Effective Marriage (in years)	Male Respondents		Wives	
	No.	%	No.	%
1. Less than 16	4	2.0	36	18.0
2. 16-18	92	46.0	104	52.0
3. 19-21	80	40.0	56	28.0
4. 22-24	16	8.0	2	1.0
5. 25 +	8	4.0	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0
Mean at Marriage	19.0 years		17.5 years	

respondents had begun their effective marriage between 16-18 **years** of age. Late marriages are always discouraged among the backward castes in Uttar Pradesh. The mean age at marriage of males is 19 **years**, while for females it is 17.5 years. The modal age interval for both males and females is 16 to 18.

E. *Number of **Children Considered Ideal***. Five males and one female is **consi-**dered the ideal size of family by the eighteen **percent** of the respondents. 16% **respondents** claim four males and one female. There are also 0.5% cases who prefer to remain issue **less**. But the preference for male children is quite conspicuous (**see Table 5**).

TABLE 5—NUMBER OF CHILDREN CONSIDERED IDEAL BY SEX

<i>Number of Children Considered Ideal by Sex Composition</i>	<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Zero Child	1	0.5
2. One Child	2	1.0
3. Two Children		
One Male and One Female	4	2.0
Both Males	15	7.5
4. <i>Three Children</i>		
One Male Two Females	2	1.0
Two Males, One Female	28	4.0
All Males	30	15.0
5. <i>Four Children</i>		
Two Males, Two Females	5	2.5
Three Males, One Female	24	12.0
6. <i>Five Children</i>		
Three Males, Two Females	6	3.0
Four Males, One Female	32	16.0
7. <i>Six Children</i>		
Five Males, One Female	36	18.0
Four Males, Two Females	15	7.5
Total	200	100.0

P. **Knowledge about Family Planning Methods.** Ninty eight percent of the respondents have knowledge about the various family planning methods. Sixty percent know about vesectomy. Only two percent of the respondents expressed their ignorance of family planning methods. When asked if they would like to learn about the family planning methods, a half of the small group responded in the negative. (See Table 6)

TABLE 6—KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY PLANNING METHODS AS INDICATED BY MALE RESPONDENTS

<i>Level of Knowledge</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>With Knowledge of Family Planning Methods:</i>	196	98.0
1. Vasectomy	120	60.0
2. Tubectomy	6	3.0
3. Loop	10	5.0
4. Oral Pills	4	2.0
5. Condoms	40	20.0
6. Herbal Methods	2	1.0
7. Natural Methods (including self control)	14	7.0
Without Knowledge	4	2.0
Would you like to learn?		
8. Yes	1	0.5
9. No	2	1.0
10. Can't say	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0

G. **Opinion on Abortion.** In response to the question on abortion, 26.5 percent of the respondents approved of abortion, 68.5 percent were against it and the remaining 5.0 percent could not say anything about it. Over two thirds of those who were against abortion contended that it was sinful to induce abortion. (See Table 7)

H. **Suggestions about Family Planning Incentives.** 45 per cent of the respondents preferred the priority in employment as an incentive for the acceptance of family planning. That residential loan should be given as an incentive was expressed by the 20% respondents. Only 14% respondents suggested land as an incen-

TABLE 7—OPINION OF ALL RESPONDENTS ON ABORTION

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Approve of Abortion	53	26.5
Don't Approve of Abortion	137	68.5
Can't say	10	5.0
4. It is sinful	98	49.0
2. Dangerous to Mother's health	17	8.5
3. Against Social Customs	20	10.0
4. No specific reasons	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

tive about family **planning**, while 1% respondents **offered** no suggestions (See Table 8).

TABLE 8—SUGGESTIONS ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING INCENTIVES

<i>Suggestions</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Land should be given	28	14.0
2. Money should be given	24	12.0
3. Priority in Employment	90	45.0
4. Free seed distribution	16	8.0
5. Residential Loan should be given	40	20.0
6. Can't say/ No Suggestions	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

Summary and Recommendations

From this limited survey, it would appear that the backward castes are responding to family planning activities. They are, however, in need of **being taught** more about family size norms and about ways to achieve these norms. **They should** also be educated about rational goals of family composition **as** they hold on strongly to excessive preference for sons. Similarly, there is a **need to educate** them about abortion, especially about its desirability **on medical grounds**. If such an educative effort is effectively undertaken, even these so **called** backward classes would respond positively to the family planning **programme**.