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Ideal, Desired, Expected and actual Family Size : An Analysis of Interrelationships and Worker Non-Worker Differences

Introduction

LITERATURE on fertility shows considerable confusion with regard to the terms used to qualify family size-ideal, desired and expected. The responses to ideal family size vary according to the notions of scholars and the presumptions of their respondents. The responses will differ according to the working and manner of canvassing the question. Several scholars even after recognising these limitations, consider the concept of 'ideal' as quite useful. (Helen Ware, 1974, for example). The concept of 'desired size' which may be influenced by the tendency to rationalise on their own experience by the respondents, is less controversial. Expected size permits consideration of all situational factors and so may indicate well-grounded judgement on the part of respondents. Often the difference between the 'desired' and the 'expected' size may be marginal. Keeping in mind these conceptual difficulties in family size preferences and expectations, we explore the fertility behavioural differentials between working and non-working women.

Objectives

It is often argued that women who participate in out-of-home employment for remuneration are likely to idealize, desire, expect and achieve a smaller family size compared to non-working women. The relationship between work participation and family size seems to be influenced by the availability of an alternative to the role of mother. When women become part of labour force, a larger non-familial system, this relationship is likely to bring to them social rewards because of which their ideals, desires, expectations and achievements of family

size are likely to be smaller than those of non-working women. Also their non-familistic activities demand time and resources which place constraints upon their family building activity.

The aim of this study is to compare the ideal, desired, expected, actual and liveborn (IDEAL for short) children of working and non-working women, besides examining the inter-relationship between these variables. IDEAL may also be referred to as parity variables,

Data

The required information was collected from Trivandrum district, Kerala State as part of a major fertility survey in 1975 from 434 working and 266 non-working women in the 20-49 age group, currently married and living with their husbands.

Kerala State is situated on the western coast of Southern India. Trivandrum district is known for high literacy. In 1981, the literacy rates were 74 00 per cent for males and 64.55 per cent for females. Health and medical facilities in Trivandrum are accessible and availed off. In 1975 the crude death rate was 4.9 and infant death rate 20.4 (Government of Kerala, 1979 : 2-3). This is a very densely populated district (1182 persons per square kilometer) and females outnumber males with 97 males per 100 females in 1981. Though advanced in social and medical aspects, in economic sphere Trivandrum is very poor. To sum up the economic situation, 70 per cent of its 1981 population were non-workers and the district is declared 'industrially backward' (Government of India, 1982). In 1974-75 the per capita income of the district was only Rs. 858 (Government of Kerala, 1977 : 80). The district reflects largely the overall situation prevailing in the State,

Definition of Concepts

To begin with it should be clarified that responses to all questions on family size relate to what the respondent thought at the time of the survey.

Ideal Family Size (IFS). The question posed to the respondents regarding IFS in this survey provides little scope for ambiguity. The question was as follows : "How many children do you think would be ideal for a family like yours"? The respondents were told that the phrase 'a family like yours' referred to the one representing the social and economic status of her family. Here ideal refers to ideal number of children in a given set of circumstances. The intention was to get a personal ideal, but the question was framed thus because (1) more often that not human beings are fairly sure of what others, rather than they themselves should, or should not have and (2) the answer will not be conditioned by feeling of not being able to achieve the ideal either way.

Desired Family Size (DFS). As stated earlier, it is specific to the individual

and in this study it is constructed from the answers to the following questions:

Q : A. How many children do you have?
Q : B. Do you have all the children you want?
All women who answered 'No' to Q.B. were asked.
Q :C. How many more children do you want if you can have exactly that many?
All women who answered 'Yes' to Q:B. were asked.
Q : D. If you could have exactly the number of children you want would you have desired the same number of children as you now have?
All women who answered 'No' to Q.D. were asked.
Q: E. If it is not the same number as you have now what would be your desired number.
Thus, there are women having exactly the number of children they desired (Q : B = Yes and Q : D = Yes); women who want additional children (Q : B = No and Q : C = Numeric answer) and women having more children than they desired (Q : B = Yes, Q : D = No and Q: E = numeric answer).

In constructing DFS, the actual number (answer to Q : A) was taken as desired for those who said both are the same. For those who desired additional children, the additional (answer to Q : C) was added to the actual. In cases where women reported as having more children than desired, the answer to Q : E was taken as DFS. In the study the terms 'desire' and 'wanted' are treated as synonimous.

Expected Family Size (EFS). EPS have two components, actual family size and additional expected. The number of additional expected was elicited by asking the following questions: 'by the time you reach 45-50 years of age, how many more children do you think you are likely to have*. This, as stated earlier, is a projection of the past to future taking into account foreseeable future changes in demographic, social and economic conditions of the couple concerned. For women who have already adopted some permanent conception control method or have reached menopause, their actual family size was taken as the EPS, as their additional expected is zero.

Actual Family Size (AFS) and Live Born Children (LBC). AFS is defined here as the number of children alive as was defined in the World Fertility Survey (UN, 1980 : 52). The number of children born alive constitute the LBC.

Findings

In the data used for the study there were no non-numeric answers as one would

expect from an economically less developed region. But this unexpected situation can rightly be attributed to the prevailing social, educational and health situation. The health facilities are accessible and availed off. The mortality levels at all levels being low, the changes of achieving the family size they desire are high. The family welfare and health education programmes widely prevalent in the State help to increase awareness of and change the attitude in favour of small family norms. Further, [the absence of nourespon.se or any non-numeric response can be attributed to, as Caldwell has pointed out (1968 : 604), the absence of strong traditionalism among the population, which again is a reflection of enlightment obtained through formal education.

In Table 1 is given the per 1000 distribution of parity variables—IDEAL—, for working and non-working women along with their mean and standard deviation. It reveals a striking preponderance of women preferring 2 or 3 children for all parity variables among both working and non-working. Among the working women the mean of actual is the smallest, whereas among the non-working women the mean of ideal is the smallest. A.11 the means are slightly more for non-workers than for workers. However, differences of means tests indicated that they are not statistically significant.

TABLE 1—DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN BY PARITY VARIABLES

Parity	*Per thousand distribution of working women by*					*Per thousand distribution of non-working women by*				
	Ideal	*Desired*	*Expected*	*Actual*	*Liveborn*	*Ideal*	*Desired*	*Expected*	*Actual*	*Liveborn*
0	2	—	21	*16*	69	—	—	8	42	38
1	21	42	37	203	187	41	26	26	135	120
2	466	431	346	309	293	432	402	293	244	224
3	424	355	366	214	214	425	361	350	286	286
4	71	106	104	85	74	87	113	135	120	128
5	16	41	48	39	55	15	49	105	90	109
6	—	14	32	34	37	—	15	30	30	23
7	—	9	34	28	41	—	30	34	34	34
8+	–	2	12	12	30	—	4	19	19	38
Mean	2.59	2.77	301	2.49	2.74	2.00	2.94	3.30	2.98	3.16
Standard Deviation	0.73	1.04	1.45	1.69	1.90	0.78	1.24	148	1.71	1.82

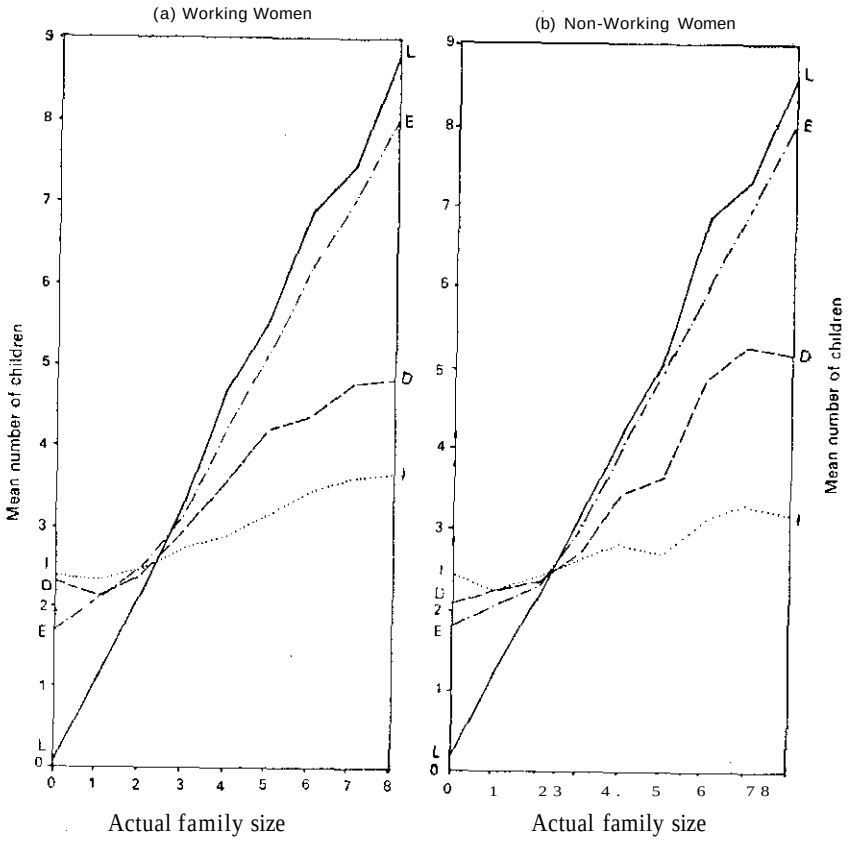
The overconcentration for 2 and 3 gets slowly scattered as one moves from ideal to desired to expected to actual. The most preferred values for ideal was 2 and 3, for desired 2, 3, and 4, for expected 3, 2, and 4 in that order for both workers and non-workers. For actual the order was 2, 3, and 1 for workers and for non-workers 3, 2 and I.

There was one woman who considered the IFS for a family like hers as zero. Perhaps this answer coming from a mother of three living children (and whose DPS was 2) shows that question is well understood. According to her, her financial position will not permit to bring up even a single child. The EPS of 9 working and 2 non-working women also was zero. This means that for these women both their actual and additional expected are zero. Their conclusion is based on several years of non-fruitful exposure to the risk of pregnancy. The effective duration of marriage among them was 4 years for two, 6 years for two, 10 years for two, and 13, 19 and 28 years for one each. The two non-working women had 21 and 29 years of duration.

Table 2 and Figures l(a) and l(b) show the mean value of parity variables by AFS. From APS 1 onwards there is a continuous increase in the mean ideal and desired family sizes. But the means for these two variables are less than the value of the AFS category to which they belong from AFS category 3 onwards. Notice that the non-workers had a smaller range for IFS and a wider range for DPS compared to their working counterparts.

TABLE 2—MEAN IDEAL, DESIRED, EXPECTED AND LIVEBORN **FAMILY** SIZE BY ACTUAL FAMILY SIZE FOR **WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN**

Working Status	*Actual Family Size*								
	0	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8+*
Worklng Women									
Mean ideal	2.30	2.32	2.44	2.73	2.86	3.12	3.40	3.57	3.00
Mean desired	2.33	2.11	2.37	2.92	3.54	4.18	4.33	4.75	4.80
Mean expected	1.70	2.10	2.44	3.10	4.16	5.06	6.13	7.00	8.00
Mean liveborn	0.09	1.15	2.15	3.19	4.68	5.53	6.87	7.42	8.80
Non-working Women									
Mean ideal	2.45	2.25	2.42	2.63	2.84	2-71	3.13	3.33	3.20
Mean desired	2.09	2.25	2.35	2.70	3.47	3.67	4.88	5.33	5.20
Mean expected	1.82	2.06	2.29	3.03	4.09	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00
Mean liveborn	0.18	1-17	2.12	3.14	4.21	5.122	6.88	7.33	**8.00**



II-Ideal; DD-Desired; EE-Expected; LL-Live born.

Fig. 1 : Mean ideal desired, expected and live born children for each actual family size.

At higher levels of parity, the rationalisation effect is expected to operate. From Table 1 it may be seen that only 20 per cent and 29 per cent respectively of working and non-working women have 4 or more living children. The extent of applicability of this effect is reflected by Table 3. Perhaps the rationalisation effect is applicable in the case of DPS to a certain extent. Roughly half the women with four children and nearly one-fourth of those with 5+ desired the same number; nearly the same proportions desired more than what they have. Among both groups of women a significant majority with 4 or 5 + AFS idealised a number less than what they have.

Another way of examining the rationalisation effect is to examine the fertility of the women who have adopted permanent conception control methods. Among non-workers, the proportion of such women was 37 per cent as against 17 per cent among their working counterparts. Table 4 shows the distribution of these women by their actual and desired family size. Among the workers

TABLE "-PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN **WITH** ACTUAL FEMILY SIZE 4 AND 5+ IDEALISING, DESIRING AND EXPECTING LESS THAN, EQUAL TO **OR MORE** THAN THE ACTUAL FAMILY SIZE **FOR WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN**

		Working women Actual family size			*Non-working women Actual family size*	
		4	*5*	*+*	*4*	*5+*
Ideal						
	Less than	81.08	91-84		*15* 00	95.65
	Equal (to	18.92	8.16		25.00	4.35
	More than	—	—		—	—
Desired						
	Less than	37.83	51.02		46.88	52.18
	Equal to	56.76	26.53		50.00	23.91
	More than	5.41	22.44		3.12	23.91
Expected*						
	Less than	—	—		—	—
	Equal to	89.19	32.66		90,63	52.17
	More than	10.81	67.34		9.37	47.83

"Less than not applicable by definition.

TABLE 4- FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTERS OF PERMANENT CONCEPTION CONTROL BY ACTUAL AND DESIRED FAMILY SIZE

Actual family size	*Working women*			*Non-working women*		
	A < D	*A = D*	*A > D*	*A < D*	*A = D*	*A > D*
1		6 - 3		'3	—	—
2	14	21	14	3	9	16
3	5	45	7	4	23	15
4		_ 7 3		1	6	2
5+	-	12	1	-	9	1
Total	25	85	33	*11*	47	34

A = Actual. *D* — Desired.

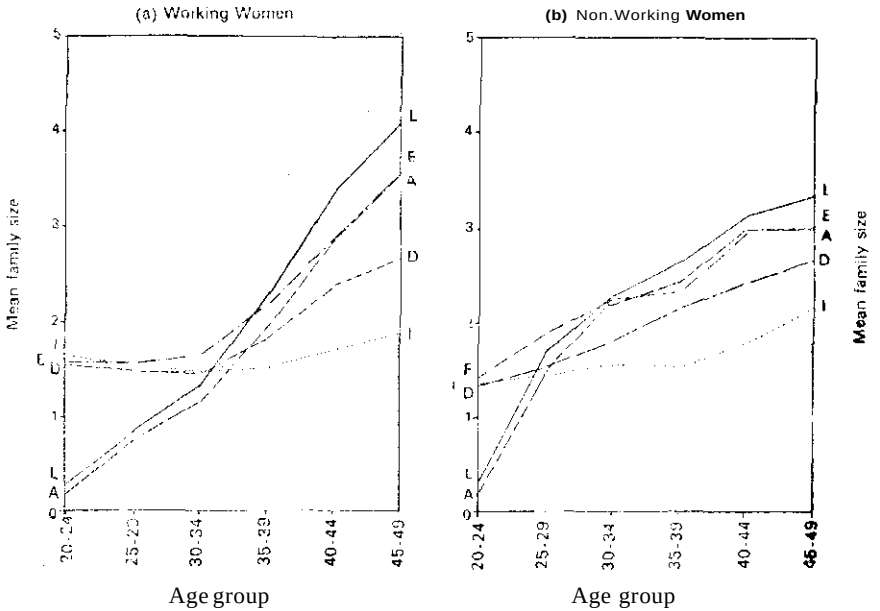
who have adopted permanent conception control method 77 per cent did so before they exceeded their desired number of children, Not only that, 63 per cent have done it before exceeding 3. The corresponding figures for non -working women are 63 per cent and 46 per cent. In other words, even among those who adopted conception control permanently the majority had only 3 or less children.

Age and Education as Determinants of IDEAL. Age and education are found to be major factors affecting parity variables. The required information is given in Table 5. Differences between the older cohorts and younger cohorts regard-

TABLE 5-MEAN IDEAL, DESIRED, EXPECTED, ACTUAL AND LIVEBORN FAMILY SIZES BY AGE GROUP AND YEARS OF SCHOOLING **FOR WORKING** AND **NON-WORKING WOMEN**

	Working women					*Non-working women*				
	Ideal	*Desired*	*Expected*	*Actual*	*Live-born*	*Ideal*	*Desired*	*Expec-ted*	*Actual*	*Live-born*
Total	2.59	2.77	3.01	2.49	2.74	2.60	2.94	3.30	2.98	3.16
Age Group										
20-24	2.66	2.55	2.57	1.17	1.28	2.36	2.33	2.43	1.21	1.29
25-29	2.54	2.50	2.56	1.76	1.84	2.42	2.54	2.93	2.51	2.69
30-34	2.47	2.46	2.63	2.14	2.30	2-56	2.83	3.27	3.24	3.29
35-39	2.52	2.83	3.20	2.95	3.31	2.53	3.18	3.32	3.44	3.65
40-44	2.73	3.40	3.88	3.85	4.37	2-81	3.41	3.94	3.94	4.13
45-49	2.92	3.67	4.53	4.53	5.11	3.17	3.66	3.97	3.97	4.34
20-29	2.45	2.51	2.53	1.55	1.64	2.40	2.46	2.71	1.97	2.11
30-39	2.49	2.63	2.88	2.49	2.77	2.54	3.03	3.45	3.36	3.50
40-49	2.81	3.51	4.15	4.13	4.64	3.00	3.54	3.96	3.96	5.12
Years of Schooling										
0	2.90	3.40	3.74	3.49	4.19	2.90	3.86	4.67	4.4S	4.86
1-4	2.78	3.02	3.22	2.78	3.06	2.90	3-67	4.14	3.52	3.86
5-7	2.93	3.40	4.00	3.33	3.71	2.89	3.54	3.84	3.66	4.00
8-10	2.54	2.82	3.08	2.79	2.80	2.46	2.72	3.06	2.72	2.85
11-I4	2.49	2.57	2.80	2-15	2.26	2,43	2,14	2.43	2.18	2.18
15+	2.33	2.26	2.35	1.75	1.83	2.32	2.26	2.32	1.97	2.06
0-4	2.85	3.24	3.53	3.19	3-76	2.90	3.71	4.40	4.02	4.57
5-10	2.75	3.13	3.58	3.08	3.36	2.61	2.99	3.32	3.04	3-22
11+	2.40	2.39	2.54	1.92	2.01	2.37	2.20	2.44	2.07	2.12

ing the ideal, desired and expected family size show that for age groups above 35 years all these variables have higher mean values; with EPS higher than DFS which in turn is higher than IPS. It may be seen that intra-group differences within the younger cohort, are not very conspicious. As expected the AFS and LBC have been increasing continuously (from lowest age group upwards. This is very clear from Figures 2(al and 2(b).



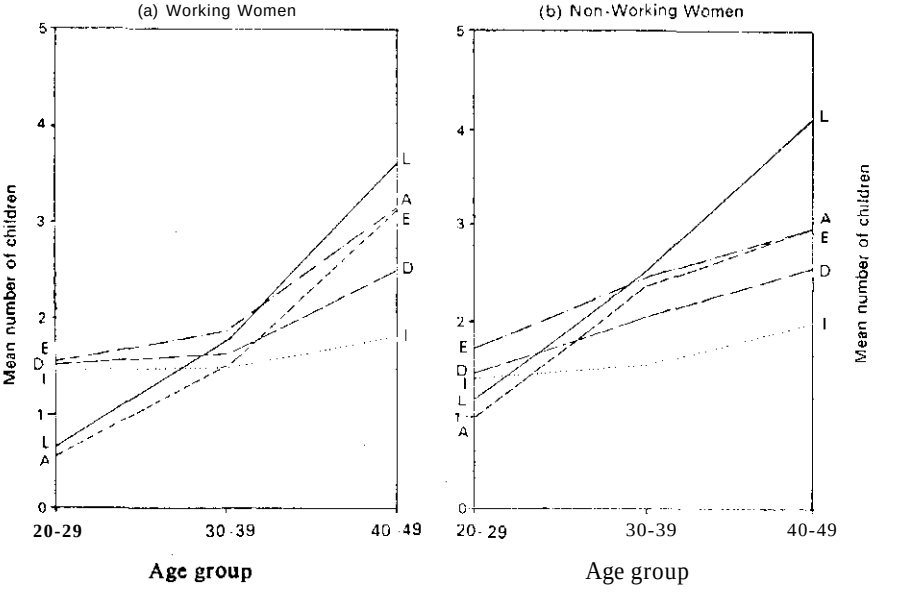
II-Ideal; DD-Desired; EE-Expected; AA-Actual; LL-Live born.

Fig. 2 : Mean family size of ideal, desired, expecled, actual and live born by age group.

The differences in *IDEAL* by age has become very clear with 10 year age grouping. For both working and non-working women there was a continuous increase in means of *IDEAL.* But the prominent factor here is that even though all the parity variables have been increasing from age group 20-29 to 40-49 there is a difference in the speed of increase between workers and non-workers. These differences are more clearly reflected by Figures 3(a) and 3(b).

Comparing working and non-working women it may be seen that generally non-workers, as compared to workers have higher mean values of parity variables. The difference is apparent in the case of younger women. For the age groups 20-29 the actuals and live bora has much lower values for working than for non-working women, showing that younger working women have already adopted small family norm. It also appears that there is a considerable difference in the parity variables as between young and old cohorts among working women. As a result the curves for the working women have taken a

sharper turn after age 39. this sharp difference between young and oldcohorts is not discernible to the same extent among non-working women.



II-Ideal; DD-Desired; EE-Expected; AA-Actual: **LL-Live** born

Fig. 3 : Mean family size of ideal, desired expected, actual and live born by broad age group.

Both workers and non-workers in the 20-29 age group idealized and desired 2-3 child family. The fact that these young women are having a smaller IFS and DPS may not be the result of either giving answer that pleases the interviewer or because of rationalisation effect, but may be due to an actual decline in the DPS traceable to changes in the social atmosphere and personal attitudes of the people.

The effect of schooling was not felt till it extended to 8 years. From then onwards, with the increase in years of schooling, *IDEAL* consistently came down. But among the non-workers the negative relationship between formal education and *IDEAL* was more clear than that of workers. In general, one finds that non-workers have higher *WEAL*. Exceptional is the 20-24 age group, where non workers had lower averages of ideal, desired and expected family sizes than those of workers.

Summary

The data used here showed that there was no significant differences in mean ideal between workers and non-workers, contrary to expectation. But the remaining parity variables did indicate a comparatively higher level for non-

workers though the differences are not statistically significant. Going by the mean one can say that there is some difference in the sequence between working and non-working women. For workers, the sequence is from actual to ideal to desired to expected (or vice versa) and for non-workers from ideal to desired to actual to expected (or vice versa). This sequence seems to suggests that there is meaning in the answers given by women about different parity variables. Of the variables chosen the least variance was for ideal family size for both workers and non-workers. It was also found that mean ideal and desired continuously increased with actual family size (when it was more than three) but remained always below the actual.

The comparative levels of *IDEAL* by age and education have shown a positive relationship with age and a negative relationship with education, particularly after 8 years of schooling. Some specific sequences observed even within different age groups and those with different levels of education shows that these parity variables are inter-related and that age and education are important determinents of these variables.

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