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Kinship Interactions and Fertility Among Yanadis—A Tribal Community in South India

IT has been borne out by the studies carried out in developing and developed countries that social and economic variables influence the fertility behaviour of couples (UN 1961 : 73 and 81; Hussain 1970; Six standard fertility surveys of India 1964-68 and Mahadevan 1979). These are the conventional variables hitherto studied in many parts of the world. But, in respect of traditional and tribal societies, many cultural factors are reported to be important for studying the determinants of fertility (Lorimer 1954; Nag 1968 and 1973; Polgar 1971; Marshall and Polgar 1976; Srinivas and Ramaswamy 1977; and Mahadevan 1981). As a part of culture, kinship organisation affects the fertility level in various ways (Freedman 1970 and Donlauro 1977). Hence, an attempt is made here to study the kinship interaction and its relationship with fertility among Yanadis.

Yanadis are a tribal community inhabiting the hilly areas, mostly in Chittoor and Nellore districts of Rayalaseema region but spread over the rest of Andhra Pradesh as well. They are the second largest group, with the population of 2,39,406 among the tribal groups of Andhra Pradesh. Yanadis are comparatively a backward tribe and have many complex features.

Review of Literature

Kinship is a system of relationship by which individuals are tied to one another by complex ramifying and interlocking bonds. The interpersonal relationships are restricted to the Kinsmen and the kinship ties bind them together (Shashi 1977). The social groupings based upon kinship ties are called

kin groups (Kar 1981). The relationship of kin groups is determined by means of geneologies. Kar (1981) stated that a definite pattern of behaviour exists among the members of the family; agnates living outside the household, other cognates and affines. Therefore, kinship provides the most affective social life within institutionalised family. On many occasions kinsmen render services gratuitously in all possible ways. Consauguineal and affinal bonds seem to rise to the surface in times of crisis. They have obligations with the relatives on their father's or mother's side (Kar 1981).

In African countries Fraenkel (1964) found that the people of Monrovian tribe paid-eighth of their wages to kin and fellow tribesmen as gifts. Kinship is a social institution among Monrovian, as in all other tribal groups, However, so far as the provision of social security is concerned kinship rights and obligations operate more effectively among the coastal people who have long established urban communities with their own internal structure and traditions, than among the scattered and mostly young immigrants from the interior areas. Even in the 'civilized' tribes, for many his ultimate security lies in the claims he can make on his kinsfolk for assistance. The strength of kinship ties arises partly from the lack of any formal provision by the government for the assistance of Monrovians in need, and it highlights the necessity of making such provision (Fraenkel, 1964). She also found that kin networks were most effective amongst the same groups. Among the kinship groups, the family obligation is of particular importance. Gibbal (1974) succinctly analysed the kinship obligation of African Tribes as follows : "It is a pleasure to send something to my relatives; help that is natural; when one has the means one must help one's kinsmen; I help because it is a family matter and I feel responsible; I am the only one who is working and who takes care of the family; the parents are old, so I must work to support them."

In the Indian context, almost all tribals maintain kinship relations. They have strong kinship bonds under one political organisation and social rank (Jaganathapathy e*t al.* 1976). The value orientation is also associated with kinship ties either lineal or collateral relations (Saunders 1966; and Kluckhohn and Strodl Back 1961). It has been suggested that the mother-in-law in extended families is the key figure influencing the decision of daughter-in-law on the number and spacing of children and *the* use of contraception. The mother-in-law often reinforces traditional high fertility value and is opposed to any attempt on the part of the daughter-in-law to restrict fertility. But according Jo the study by Mukherji (1975), the husband is the key barrier to the wife's use of contraception. Moreover, fertility behaviour varies widely among the joint as well as nuclear families (Chaudhury, 1982).

Freedman (1970) observed that kinship organisation affects the fertility level in various ways. The study of fertility behaviour in two different kinship groups by Donlauro (1977) revealed the conflicting evidence on fertility behaviour between the 'Kpelle' of central Liberia in West Africa, and 'Thais'.

Kpelle have a pro-natalistic orientation, derived the influence from kinship. In this region, kinsmen had a vested interest in promoting procreation in nuclear families. The mechanisms of the authority vested in elders, obligations of kinship support, and assistance manifest pronatalism in Kpelle society. Early marriage and sexual permissiveness have been cited as some of the explicit means for the achievement of pronatalist ideas. Within the nuclear families, pronatalism exist in Kpelle villages. Security and solace for aging parents both in this life and beyond is provided by descendents who would share material and spiritual responsibilities (Donlauro, 1977).

In contrast, the Thais' have markedly indifferent pronatalist values. This indifference derives *from the lineal orientation of village society. Authority* emanates largely from beyond both kinship lineages and village society. Thai villages neither have a vested interest in, nor do they expect benefit from, greater progeny among their kinsmen. The burden of providing economic security falls largely upon the youngest daughter.

The Kpelle children played a more productive role in the household economy; it is minimal in respect of Thai children. Private ownership of land limits Thai pro-natalism, while communal ownership among the Kpelle favours it. Also the higher infant mortality and less opportunity for economic achievement are correlated with pronatalistic attitude and behaviour among Kpelle. (Donlauro 1977).

Caste and Fertility

Hindus caste groups and the Muslims show differences in kinship and their fertility behaviour. The specificity of kinship structure within each caste may be responsible for variations in fertility which need to be studied. For example, the family planning survey in Uttar Pradesh (Saksena 1974) revealed that Muslims had higher fertility (CBR 50) than the Hindus (CBR 36-39). Similarly fertility differences are found in many studies by caste group (Lorimer, 1954; Nag 1968; Samuel 1963; Mahadevan 1972; Gupta *et al.* 1975 and Harish Srivatsava 1979). Therefore, kinship has a greater role in determining the fertility behaviour of individuals in different castes.

Objective and Methodology

The main objective here is to study the interference of kinsmen like mothers-in-law and other relatives in the fertility behaviour of Yanadi couples. It is also hypothesized that the more the interference of kinship groups like mothers-in-law, elder cousins and other relatives on the matters of family formation, the higher will be the fertility. As for the methodology, a simple random sampling procedure was adopted for selection of sample and the size of the sample was fixed as 600 eligible couples. The sample was selected from a list of households of all Yanadis from all villages belonging to Srikalahasthi and Thottambedu

taluks of Chittoor district. For selection of samples, in the first stage, all villages where Yanadis are living were listed out. Then, their households were enumerated. From every household only one eligible couple with two or more live births were taken. An appropriate interview schedule was prepared for the purpose of collecting data from the respondents. For testing the significance of variables the V-test was applied. Also regression analysis was carried out by taking number of live births as a dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

Kinship is one of the cultural variables, which interferes with the fertility behaviour of individuals. According to Indian tradition, people have very close attachment to their kins, on whom they rely in matters relating to contraceptive practice. Generally the kins like mothers-in-law, mothers, grand-mothers ete., advise the couple to have more children and object to practice of contraception. Therefore, they act as barries for the promotion of family planning adoption.

According to our survey. 49.0 per cent of the respondents felt that there is an interference by kins particularly women in the household, in respect of matters related to the limitation of family size. Among the different members of the kinship group who influence the family formation of eligible couples included mothers (24.3%), mothers-in-law (8.3%) and father (5.0%). Besides these, elder cousins (6.7%), in-laws and grand-mothers (5%) used to interfere with the respondents' family formation patterns, including the adoption of contraception.

In respect of contraceptive practice, 32.7 per cent of the members of the kinship groups advised the respondents not to accept any kind of contraception and continue to have more children. But it is also noticed that 10.0 per cent of mothers-in-law suggested to the respondents to practise one of the methods of contraception and they also agreed to limit the family size to the existing number of children.

The influence of kinship group other than mother-in-law who had pronatalistic attitude was also studied. 41.7 per cent of them interfered with contraceptive practice of the respondents. A question was asked as to how seriously the respondents accepted the advice or objection of mothers-in-law and others about the matters of contraception; the answers are presented in Tables 1.

Contrary to our general notion, it is interesting to note that slightly more than 50 per cent of respondents did not seriously consider the advice given by mothers-in-law and other relatives. However, the next group of 22 and 17 per cent respondents receiving suggestions from mothers-in-law and other relatives respectively did act on their advice. This shows that even in a tribal community with *a* less kinship control in their society, mother-in-law and other relatives continue to play a significant role in decision-making. Of course, there is

TABLE 1—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ON ACCEPTING/REJECTING THE ADVISE OF KINSHIP GROUP

	Mother-in-law	*Others*
Did not consider	50.8 (305)	58.3 (350)
Ignored	16.5 (99)	11.2 (67)
Delayed action	*9.4* (56)	30.3 (62)
Postponed	1.0 (6)	3.5 (21)
Complied with	22.3 (134)	16.7 (100)
Total	100.0 (600)	100.0 (600)

Figures in brackets indicate the number.

the other one-tenth of the respondents who practically ignored the suggestion of their relatives and another one-tenth who postponed their action because of the interference of the relatives.

The fertility behaviour of respondents who were influenced by kinship groups is shown in Table 2,

TABLE 2—MEAN NUMBER OF LIVE BIRTHS ACCORDING TO THE INTERFERENCE WITH KINSHIP GROUP LIKE MOTHERS-IN-LAW AND OTHERS

	Kinship interference	*Duration of married life in years*				
		Upto 10	*11 to 20*	*21 +*	*Total*	*SD*
I	Interference of mothers-in-law and other kinsmen	2.6 (98)	39 (114)	5.9 (80)	4.0 (292)	2.0
11	No such interference with kinsmen	2.3 (103)	3.7 (134)	4.7 (71)	3.5 (308)	1.5
	Total	2.4 (201)	3.8 (248)	5.4 (151)	3.7 (600)	1.8

't' cal (I & II) = 3.45 at 0.01 LOS*

'Indicated the difference in mean live births between the people with kinship interference and those reporting non-interference to be statistically significant.

Note : *'t'* value is considered as *significant at 1 per cent l*evel of significance (LOS) when 't' cal. value **is** greater than *'t'* cri. value (2.58).

The data in table 2 show that the respondents who had interference from kinship group like mothers-in-law and others had higher fertility of 4.0 live births as compared to others who had 3.5 live births. Also it is found that the respondents who complied with the advice or objection of mothers-in-law and others had higher fertility of 4.1 MLB as compared to 3.7 of the others who did not behave accordingly.

A step-wise regression analysis was applied to focus on the influence of individual independent variables on fertility behaviour and also to assess the combined influence of several factors. **In** this analysis the number of live births is taken as dependent variable and all the remaining socio-cultural and demographic variables including kinship interaction have been considered as independent variables. Out of these variables, linear relationship is found to be important with only four major variables and kinship is one among them. Thus, the interference of members of kinship groups emerged as the second most powerful variable which explains 14 per cent of the variation in fertility. As shown earlier, a significant proportion of the respondents admitted that several categories of relatives influenced their fertility behaviour. Therefore, the hypothesis that more the interference of kinship groups, higher will be the fertility among Yanadi couples is confirmed.

Hence, it may be concluded that kinship has a significant influence on fertility behaviour of tribal people like Yanadis. These findings suggest the need for extending population education not only to eligible couples but equally to other appropriate members of the 'kinship group' like mothers-in-iaw, elder cousins and parents who influence family formation and contraceptive behaviour of eligible couples in the community.

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