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Age At Marriage Differentials in Ghana (West Africa): A Multivariate Analysis

MARRIAGES in most tribal African societies are almost universal, as in many other developing areas. Permanent celibacy is virtually non-existent and every adult, male or female, unless afflicted by physical or mental illness, is expected to get married sooner or later. According to the 1960 Ghanaian Census, 91 percent of all females and 65 percent of males aged 15 years and over had been married. The corresponding figures for 1968 were a little lower, i.e., 87 percent for females and 62 percent for males (Gaisie, 1976 : 42). After this age, however, the percentage not married continues to dwindle and for the age group 25-34 the probability is almost 100 percent that a woman had married. For males in the age group 35-44 there is 90 percent probability that marriage has taken place at least once (Tettech, 1967 : 202). The proportion marrying and age at marriage is determined by the availability of mates, the feasibility and desirability of marriage (Dixon, 1971 : 221). The availability of mates is influenced by sex ratios and in a society where there are severe imbalances between the sexes, some people from the more numerous sex should either be compelled to delay their marriage or completely forego it because of non-availability of mates. The prevailing institution of polygamy in many African societies, however, makes the availability of mates easier even when the sex ratio are imbalanced. Dixon points out that in a society where arranged marriage is the general pattern, the availability of mates is facilitated by the elders, who assume the responsibility of arranging the matches for their children and consequently the marriages take place at earlier ages. But in a free choice situation under which the young people search and attract their own partners, the marriages

occur at a comparatively later age because the partners should be old enough to make their own decisions (1971 : 222). Blake, however, does not find any support in the available empirical evidence for the association of very early marriages with parental control. She suggests that marriages in which parental control is exercised are conducive to either extreme, very early or very late (1967 : 139).

The feasibility of marriage is conditioned by, among other things, financial constraints and considerations. In traditional societies the extended family and kinship relations make marriages more feasible. In these societies the young couples are incorporated into the existing extended families and marriages arc not contingent upon economic independence and possession of property. In many tribal societies where the system of bride price is prevalent, the members of a lineage group help each other by way of contributing to bride price.

The desirability of marriage depends upon the perception of relative rewards and penalties of marriage and alternatives to marriages for the potential partners (Dixon, 1971 : 222). In traditional agriculture societies, women have very few alternatives to marriage. One of the characteristics of tropical African societies is the strong emphasis on kinship groups and perpetuating lineages. Non-marriage is considered abnormal and to remain childless is the greatest personal tragedy for both men and women. Apart from the social and religious mores, marriage and children are also considered desirable from the economic point of view. In the absence of any social security system, the children are regarded as a means of security in old age. Thus, the prevailing social and institutional mechanisms of the African tribal societies not only make marriages universal but also facilitate its early occurrence. The existence of child betrothal in the tribal societies of Africa in the past has been vividly described by Goode :

> Among the Tswana (Bechuana Land) the betrothal of brother's daughters and father's sister's sons was especially likely to be arranged when they were young children. Many West African societies arranged infant betrothal for girls, and in northern part of Central Africa some tribes practised prepubbertal betrothal. In West Africa, for example, the Kilba, Kirai and Bura practised infant betrothal of boys. Betrothal was likely to occur before puberty in the Nurba Hills. A similar pattern was found among the Dogan, among the wealthy Mende, the Akan speaking people generally and also among (at least) the Nsaw of Bameda province and the Samba (1963 : 173).

Although the practice of betrothing small girls is still prevalent in some rural areas of Ghana, there are many cases where women want to marry men of their own choice and refuse to marry men with whom they were earlier betrothed by their parents. Particularly in the urban areas, there is comparative freedom for the young persons to avoid certain types of partners (Tettech, 1967 : 205). Now since the parents cannot guarantee the fulfilment of the contracts they make with

each other, they are less inclined to enter into betrothal of their children at an early age (Goode, 1963 : 175).

In tribal African societies the puberty ceremoney also played a very important role in the exposure of women to intercourse. It marked the point where full intercourse was permissible and marriage took place immediately thereafter. The ceremony usually took place soon after first menstruation which obviously is not constant and varies with environmental factors, nutritional status and genetic factors. The average age at menarche for the Nigerian girls in one study was found to be 14 years and the range within which 95 percent experienced menarche was 11.2 to 17.0 years (Tanner, 1958: 188). But menstruation among the Ashanti girls of Ghana was reported to begin about the sixteenth year and the first marriage generally took place one year after that (Forte, 1954 : 297).

In the past the girls were not expected to have sexual relations before their puberty rights were performed, and since a great premium was placed on virginity at marriage, the marriages usually took place soon after this ceremony. Pregnancy of a girl before her puberty ceremony brought a great disgrace on her parents and the lineage members and in many societies it was regarded as a public offense punishable by law (Tettech, 1967 : 204). The rigidity with which this custom was observed in the past has now slackened even in the rural areas. For example, among the Ashantis, the puberty rites are now performed in a very few cases and as soon as the girl menstruates for the first time, the queen mother of the community is informed and thereafter the girl is free to enter into heterosexual relations.

Questions about age at marriage are not asked at the time of census even in those African countries which have their regular censuses, such as Ghana. The estimates of age at marriage for a few African countries can therefore be derived only from limited sample surveys. The results of these studies show that there are considerable variations in the age at marriage not only as between the different countries in Africa, but also between the various regions, between rural and urban areas of the same country and between different socio-economic groups.

In a rural Moroccan study the average age at marriage for females was reported to be 15.5. Approximately half of the women were married between the ages 15 and 17 (Moroccan Government, 1970 : 2). In a survey of two West Nigerian towns, Olusanaya found the mean age at marriage for females to be 19 and 20 years respectively. He pointed out that both rural and urban girls in this society enter into conjugal relations on an average at a reasonably late age, partly because of cultural reasons. The ideal before a Yoruba girl is to be a good housekeeper and it takes years to acquire domestic skills. Furthermore, in order to function as a "complete" wife, she is expected to take to her husband's home utensils, clothes and other household accessories, in order to acquire which she must trade for a few years before marriage. This consequently results in delayed

marriages (1969 : 366 and 1971 : 664).

The analysis of a survey carried out in the year 1952 in both urban and rural areas of Ghana showed the mean female age at marriage to be approximately 18 years in the rural towns and a little over 21 years in urban towns (Busia, 1954 : 345). A study in a rural farm community and salt town in Ghana showed that one-fourth of the girls were first married before the age of *15,* while for the remaining three-fourths first marriage took place before they were 19 years old. In Yeji rural farm community the proportion of girls first married before the age of 15 was 3 percent but of those married before the age of 19 was 63 percent (Tetteh, 1967 : 202). In another study in the economically superior urban areas of Ghana, the average age at marriage of the urban elite women was 22.6 years (Caldwell, 1967 : 21). A survey by Friedlander and Smith in 1961 revealed that 61 percent of the women in four rural towns in Ghana married between ages 16 and 18 and about 81 percent married before 20 years of age. The corresponding figures for Sekondi-Takoradi were 54 and 70 percent respectively (See Gaisie, 1976 : 47). Based on the post-enumeration data of the 1960 Ghana Census, it has been estimated that mean age at marriage for females is 17.7 years in rural areas and 18.7 years in urban areas (Gaisie, 1976 : 47).

It is not only the female age at marriage which is important: the age at which males marry and disparity in age at marriage between the two sexes have also a great social and demographic significance. This has, however, received inadequate attention in the demographic literature. The men in all societies marry later than the women. The available evidence in Africa reveals considerable difference between the female and male ages at first marriages. In the part, although the age of women at marriage was very low, the young men under the older African system married rather late—at an average age of 25 years (Goode, 1963 : 180). The rural Moroccan Survey revealed the mean age at marriage for men to be 22-3 years (Moroccan Government, 1970 : 2). The 1952 Ghana survey reported the male age at marriage to be 20 and 27 years in the rural and urban areas respectively (Busia, 1945 : 345). The results of a rural farm community and adjacent salt town survey in Ghana showed that although the age at marriage for men was higher, about 60 percent of them were married before the age of 24 years (Tetteh, 1967 : 202). Analysis of data by Caldwell also suggests that the average age at first marriage for males for Ghana as a whole is about 25 years (1967 : 69).

As regards differences in age between the spouses, Dixon in her survey of cross-cultural variations in age at marriage found an average gap ranging from two to nine years in various societies included in her study. The conclusion reached by ber was that the younger the bride, the greater the difference (1971 : 216). The survey carried out by Caldwell both in urban and rural areas of Ghana revealed the husbands to be older than their wives by an average of 5 to 6 years in urban areas and 12 years in rural areas. Caldwell tried to explain

this apparently large age gap in the rural marriages in terms of a large number of men who have acquired second or third wives as well as a relatively late age at which males marry (1967 : 70-73).

As mentioned above, there are also considerable regional and socio-economic differences in age at a marriage. Caldwell has pointed out the north-south differences in age at marriage in Ghana. While in the north most females in the age group 15-19 are married, this position is not reached in the south until they are 20-24 years of age (1967 : 69). Caldwell also points out that differentials in age at first marriage in Ghana can be easily related to economic and social factors. In his Survey of population attitudes in economically superior urban areas, he found that females from the middle and upper class suburbs of Accra, Kumasi, Takorari-Sekondi and Cape Coast had an average age at first marriage of 22.2 years, which was considerably above the average for all urban Ghana (Caldwell, 1967 : 69).

Many studies in the developing countries have reported that a close relationship exists between educational status and age at marriage of females (United Nations 1961 : 108; Driver, 1963 : 70; Olusanaya, 1967 : 357). However, there is a complex relationship between the various socio-economic variables. The author is not aware of any study which has examined the effect of any single variable on age at marriage while controlling the others through the use of multivariate statistical techniques. Thus, our knowledge about the determinants of age at marriage, in the developing countries in general and Africa in particular, remains incomplete.

Objectives, Methodology and Sources of Data

The main objective of this paper is to examine the age at first marriage in rural Ghana and to analyse its salient determinants both for the husbands and wives. The analysis is based on interviews with 778 husbands and 857 wives. The survey was carried out in 1972 by the DANFA Comprehensive Rural Health and Family Planning Project, Ghana with which the author was associated for about five years. This was a demonstration, teaching and research project developed and implemented jointly by the University of Ghana Medical School and School of Public Health, University of California, Los Angeles and located within a radius of 15-50 miles from the capital city of Accra.

The main statistical techniques used for the study are cross-tabulation, one-way analysis of variance and multiple classification analysis (MCA). Since most of our variables are nominal, the techniques most appropriate for analysing the relationship between age at first marriage and each of the socio-economic variables is MCA. It is an extension of 'dummy'variable multiple regression analysis where the explanatory variables may represent membership in classes rather than numerical values. MCA obtains for each sub-class of independent

Variables a coefficient indicating its influence on the dependent variable after the effects of other variables have been taken into account. This technique is particularly useful for independent variables which are unordered (religion, tribe, occupation, family type etc.). MCA routinely computes a multiple *R* as well as Beta coefficients which are analogous to partial *B* coefficients in ordinary multiple regression with numerical values (Andrews et al 1967 : 1-7).

Findings and Discussion

Age at First Marriage

It could be seen from Table 1 that the husbands married for the first time at an average age of 25.2 years while the corresponding figure of the wives was

TABLE 1—AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF RURAL GHANAIAN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Age at First Marriage	Husbands		Wives	
	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 16	4	0.5	85	10.4
16-19	40	5.3	468	57.0
20-24	300	39,5	244	29.7
25-29	281	37.0	24	2.9
30-34	98	12.9	—	—
35 +	36	4.8	—	—
Total	759	100.0	821	100.0
Mean age at first marriage	25.2		18.4	

18.4 years. Thus the husbands on an average married seven years later than the wives. The table also reveals that whereas very few husbands had married before they were 20 years old, more than two-thirds of the wives had entered their first marriage prior to their twentieth birthday. Approximately two-fifths of the husbands were married between the age of 20 to 24 and a little more than one-third had done so during 25-29 years. Another one-eighth bad their first marriage in the age span of 30-34 and a few of them were first married at the age of 35 or more.

As regards wives, a little more than two-thirds entered first marriage before

the age of 20 and three-tenths, during the age span of 20-24 years; the remaining very few had their first marriage at the age of 25 or over.

Husband-Wife Age Differentials

On an average, the husbands in our sample are found to be approximately 9 years older than their wives. The mean difference is 8.7 years between monogamous husbands and wives, 9.5 and 12.6 years between polygamous husbands and their first and second wives respectively. The third or subsequent wives of polygamous husbands were found to be on an average 16 years younger than their husbands.

Furthermore, the wife's age at first marriage and current husband-wife age differentials are observed to be inversely related, i.e. younger the age at first marriage of the wife, higher the age differential between her and present spouse. These differentials are found to be statistically significant in case of monogamous wives and their husbands ($r = 0.171$; $p = 0.002$) but not so for polygamous husbands and their wives ($r = .079$, $p = 0.149$). Thus, in case of monogamous couples, our results are consistent with those found by Dixon (1971 : 216) in other cultures.

Age at First Marriage of Husbands and Wires by Selected Characteristics

In order to find out if there are any significant socio-economic, religious or ethnic differentials in age at first marriage of both males and females in our sample, first one way analysis of variance of mean age at first marriage with each of the following characteristics of husbands and wives is done : education, occupation, religion, tribe, lineage, type of marriage, type of conjugal relation, type of family, and number of previous marriages. For wives an additional variable, age at menarche, is also included. However, since many of these variables are likely to be interrelated, it is desirable to isolate the effect of each of these variables on age at first marriage by controlling the other intervening variables through the use of multivariate techniques. In this connection analysis of covariance is done in which occupation, religion, tribe, type of marriage, and type of conjugal relation are introduced as factors while age, education, number of previous marriages, number of children desired, and age at menarche (only for wives) are included as covariates. The results of the analysis of covanance shows that for husbands the joint effect of covariates have a higher level of significance ($F = 13.94$; $P = 0.000$) as compared to the joint effect of all nominal Variables ($F = 1.71$; $p = 0.04$), though in both cases it is statistically significant. Furthermore, multiple classification analysis (MCA) reveals that the above variables (factors and covariates) are able to explain about 13 per cent of the variation in age at first marriage for husbands, the respective R^2 for factors

(nominal variables) and covariates (numerical variables) being 0.04 and 0.09. For wives, the multiple classification analysis (MCA) gave Rvalue of 0.327. Here again most of this variation is explained by the covariates (R^2 = 0.290) while the contribution of factors in the total variation explained is negligible (R^2 = 0.031). However, the joint effect of both factors and covariates is highly significant, the respective statistics being : F = 3.49; p = 0.000 and F = 83.17; p = 0.000. The results of both bivariate and multivariate analysis are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The individual effect of each variable on age at first marriage, both of husbands and wives, is discussed below.

TABLE 2—MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF RURAL GHANAIAN HUSBANDS AND WIVES BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Selected Characteristics	Husbands			Wives		
	No. of cases	Mean age at first marriage	Standard deviation	No.of cases	Mean age at first marriage	Standard deviation
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
Age at Meoarche						
12 or less				49	16.4	2.7
13 years				53	16.2	2.3
14 years				123	17.3	2.1
15 years				279	18.3	2.5
16 years				208	19.1	2.2
17 years				46	20.5	2.8
18 years				52	21.4	2.7
Education						
None	463	24.9	6.0	658	18.3	2.7
Primary	118	25.0	4.9	90	18.4	2.9
Middle	161	23.1	7.2	63	18.7	2.1
Higher	33	25.2	4.2	9	20.9	4.1

Table 2 *(contd. on page 62)*

Table 2 *(contd. from page 61)*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Occupation						
Not working, students, trainees unemployed & retired persons	19	20.4	9.4	90	17.9	2.4
Professional and Technical personnel, govt. officers, business executives and other white collar workers	39	25.8	4.4			
Farmers	573	24.6	6.3	446	18.5	2.7
Drivers, and other transport workers, Postmen, messengers **line-men** etc.	33	24.9	4.2	—	—	—
Village artisans, bakers **masons,** carpenters, **tool makers,** mechanic, **Jewellers** etc.	63	24.7	**4.8**	—	—	—
Alcohol distillers, retail traders, sales **and shop** assistants **and others**	**16**	22.9	3.5	285	18.5	2.7
Labourers, watchmen, cooks and other **manual workers**	34	25.1	5.8	—	—	—
Religion						
Protestant	275	23.9	6.6	285	18.4	2.7
Catholic	41	25.5	4.6	27	18.1	2.9
Muslim	63	27.1	6.1	50	17.4	2.6
Traditional	394	24.7	5.4	457	18.6	2.7

Table *1 (contd. on page* 63)

Table 2 (contd, from page 62)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ethnicity						
Ga	257	23.9	6.9	240	18.3	2.6
Ewe	145	24.0	5.2	204	18.8	2,9
Akan	145	24.9	5.7	162	18.6	2.4
Other	173	25.8	5.9	181	18.0	2.7
Type of Marriage						
Monogamous	589	24,7	6.3	566	18.4	2.7
Polygamous	184	24.0	5.2	255	18.5	2.7
Type of Conjugal RelattoB						
Customery	713	24.9	5.5	713	18.4	2.7
Mutual Content or friendship	50	24.5	5.6	85	18.9	2.8
No. of Previous Marriages						
None	421	24.6	6.7	567	18.5	2.7
1	221	24.9	5.1	204	18.3	2.8
2 or more	135	23.9	5,5	50	18.1	2.6
Type of Family						
Nuclear	443	24.5	5.6	455	18.5	2.8
Extended	334	24.6	6,6	366	18.3	2.6
Lineage						
Patrilineal	451	24.0	6.2	444	18.6	2-8
Matrilineal	326	25.4	5.8	377	18.3	2.3

Age at Menarche

The mean age at menarche for the wives in our sample has been found to be 15.1 years. Approximately one-eighth of the women reported that they had

TABLE 3—SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPENDENT VARIABLE *Y* (AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE) AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Independent Variables X_{xi}	Significance of Relationship			
	Husbands		Wives	
	Bivariate analysis	Multivariate analysis	Bivariate analysis	Multivariate analysis
X_1 Age at menarche	—	—	S	S
X_2 Educational level	S	NS	S	S
X_3 Occupation	S	NS	NS	S
X_4 Religion	S	NS	S	NS
X_5 Ethnicity	S	NS	S	S
X_6 Type of marriage	NS	S	NS	NS
X_7 Type of conjugal relationship	NS	S	NS	NS
X_8 Number of previous marriages	NS	S	NS	S
X_9 Type of family	NS	NS	NS	NS
X_{10} Lineage	S	NS	NS	NS
X_{11} Number of children desired	NS	NS	—	—

*P> .05

**$Y = a + b_1 x_1 \ldots$

***$Y = a + b_1 x_1 + b_2 x_2 \ldots + b_n x_n$

S = Significant

NS = Not significant.

their first menstruation at the age of 13 or below while another one-eighth gave their age at menarche as 17 years and above. Besides these extreme cases, about one half of the respondents reported their age at menarche to be 14 or 15 years and the remaining about one-fourth mentioned that they were 16 years of age when they had their first menstruation. An attempt is also made to find out if there are any socio-economic, religious or ethnic differentials in age at menarche. The results of our analysis do not show any religious differentials ($F = 1.96$; $p = 0.118$) but significant ethnic (tribal) differentials are observed ($F = 2.74$; $p = 0.042$). For analysing the relationship between socio-economic

measure, the educational level attained by the women is used as a proxy for her parent's socio-economic status. The girls belonging to the higher economic status had their menstruation earlier but in our analysis though the relationship between the above two variables is negative, it is statistically not significant (r = 0.028; p = 0.146). So far as the effect of age at menarche on age at first marriage is concerned, on an average the first marriage took place three years after the menstruation had set in. The relationship between these two variables is found to be positive and highly significant in both one-way analysis of variance (F = 39.3; p = 0.000) and analysis of covariance (F = 211.24; p = 0.000).

Education

The relationship between the educational level attained by the wife and her age at first marriage is linear and positive though the differences between those with no education, primary level education, and middle level education are only/ marginal. The overall relationship between these two variables is found to be significant in one-way analysis of variance (F = 2.71; p = 0.044) and the analysis of covariance increases the level of significance considerably (F = 13.43; p = 0.000),

The relationship between age at first marriage and educational level of the husband is, however, curvilinear. Those with none, primary or higher education married at a considerably later age as compared to those with middle level education. The probable reasons for this trend are not difficult to seek. **It** is most likely that husbands with no education, or only primary level education belonged to lower Socio-economic group and were engaged in low paying occupations with a result that it took them years before they could accumulate enough money to pay the bride price. On the other hand those with higher level education apparently took longer to complete their education before entering into matrimonial alliances.

The effect of education on husbands age at marriage has also been found to be statistically significant in one-way analysis of variance (F = 3.9; p =.008) but the analysis of covariance reduces it to a level of non-significance (F = 0.18; p = 0.674). Thus, education of the husband in our analysis does not seem to have any profound effect on the age at first marriage,

Occupation

The wives in farming or trading occupations have same age at first marriage which is slightly higher than those not working. These occupational differentials in age at first marriage of wives are not found to be statistically significant in one-way analysis of variance, but when in the analysis of covariance other

intervening variables are controlled, they reach the level of significance (F= 4.41; p = 0.012).

Regarding husbands, the one-way analysis of variance shows significant occupational differentials in age at first marriage *(F* = 2.1; *p* = 0. 051). A close look at Table 2 would reveal that except for those not employed, which includes retired persons who are obviously old, there is not much variation in the age at first marriage among other occupational categories. Thus, in the analysis of covariance when the effect of age along with other variables is controlled, the significance of relationship between occupation and age at marriage observed in the initial bivariate analysis disappears *(F* = 0.619; *p* = 0.715). Occupation of the husband, therefore, does not seem to have any significant relationship with age at first marriage.

Religion

The Muslim wives reported the lowest age at first marriage and those having faith in traditional religion, the highest. Among the Christians, the Catholic women married earlier than the Protestants. These differentials are statistically significant in one-way analysis of variance *(F* = 3.0; *p* = 0.030) but are reduced to a non-significant level when the analysis of covariance is performed (F = 1.57; *p* = 0.195).

In the case of husbands our analysis shows that Protestant husbands married at the lowest average age of 23.9 years, while the Muslims married for the first time at an average age of 27.1 years, which is the highest among all the religious groups. The husbands belonging to other two religious groups, i.e., Catholics and 'Traditional' married at an average age of 25.5 and 24.7 years respectively, Like wives, religious differentials in age at first marriage of husbands are highly significant in one-way analysis of variance but the analysis of covariance reduces them to a level of statistical non-significance *(F* = 2.1; *p* = 0.100).

Ethnicity

Significant ethnic differentials are observed in age at first marriage of wives both in one-way analysis of variance *(F* = 3.70; *p* — 0.012) and analysis of covariance (F = 3.78; *p* = 0.010). The wives belonging to the other tribes (northern and non-Ghanaian) reported the lowest age at first marriage, while those belonging to the Ewe tribal group had their first marriage at a relatively higher age. Among the remaining two tribes Ga women tend to marry earlier than the Akan.

For husbands tribal differentials in age at first marriage though found to be statistically significant on initial analysis *(F = 3.8; p* = 0.01) are reduced to a level of non-significance when analysis of covariance is done.

Type of Marriage

No significant differences are observed in the age at first marriage between monogamous and polygamous wives. The statistics obtained as a result of one-way analysis of variance and analysis of covariance are : $t = 0.43$; $p = 0.634$, and $t = 0.17$; $p = 0.880$ respectively. The analysis for husbands, however, reveals that the monogamous husbands married for the first time at an average age of 24.7 years while for polygamous husbands the mean age at first marriage works out to be 24.0 years. These differentials are not highly significant in one-way variance ($t = 1.56 : p = 0.075$) but when in the analysis of covariance other relevant variables are controlled the value of t considerably increases and reaches a level of statistical significance (l = *2.15; p* = 0.020). Thus, our analysis reveals that currently polygamous husbands had their first marriages at a significantly lower age than the currently monogamous husbands.

Type of Conjugal Relationship

The women in mutual consent or friendship unions are found to have higher age at first marriage than those in customary type unions. This relationship between these two variables is significant in one-way analysis of variance $t = 1.73$; $p = 0.02$) and remains so in the analysis of covariance ($t = 1.72$; p = 0.02).

Number of Previous Marriages

An inverse relationship between number of previous marriages of wife and her age at first marriage is observed. This relationship though not significant in one-way analysis of variance (F= 1.00; p = 0.175), reaches the level of significance (F = 8.02; $p = 0.005$) when in the analysis of covariance other variables are controlled.

Similar results are obtained for husbands. The husbands who reported two or more previous marriages are found to have lower age at first marriage than those who had none or one previous marriage. Here again, these differences though not significant in our bivariate analysis ($F = 1.2$; $p = 0.300$) are observed to be highly significant in multivariate analysis ($F = 14.17$; $p = 0.000$).

Type of Family, Lineage and Number of Children Desired

The net effect of type of family, and lineage on the husband's and wife's age at first marriage has been found to be statistically not significant. Furthermore, it has often been observed in sociological and demographic literature that individuals who have higher reproductive norms tend to marry early so that they could have maximum number of children in their life. However, in our analysis

' of covariance, we do not find any significant relationship between number of children desired by the husband and his age at first marriage ($F = 0.546$; $p = 0.460$),

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, the age at first marriage for husbands and wives has been found to be 25.2 and 18.4 years respectively. Further, on an average the husbands are found to be approximately 9 years older than their wives and the wife's age at first marriage and current husband-wife age differentials are observed to be inversely related. Our analysis also shows that so far as age at first marriage is concerned, our prediction is much better for wives than for husbands. For wives we have been able to explain about 33 percent of the variation in age at first marriage while for husbands it is only 13 percent.

Furthermore, the variables which have significant relationship with age at first marriage are more numerous in case of wives than the husbands. The characteristics of the husbands which have significant relationship with bis age at first marriage are : type of marriage (polygamy or monogamy) and number of previous marriages, while for the wives significant explanatory variables are : age at menarche, education, occupation, ethnicity, and number of previous marriages.

The results of both bivariate and multivariate analysis have been included in this paper in order to demonstrate the hazards of basing our conclusions on the results of only bivariate analysis, which is often reported in many such studies.

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