

Presence of Daughters-in-Law in the Household: A Good Contraceptive

Introduction

IT is widely known fact that human fertility is governed by a number of biological factors on the one side and many socio-cultural factors on the other. One of the most important socio-cultural factors affecting fertility has been the presence of daughters-in-law in the household which acts as an important factor for observing greater abstinence by mothers-in-law resulting in lower fertility at the later part of their married life. In some studies, the older woman is reported to feel "disgrace" on becoming pregnant and she is said to have a "feeling of shame". "Cutting jokes" about such women are made in a Bengal village and they face community criticism (Opter, 1964; Gould, 1969 and Mathen, 1962). Such a feeling of a woman has been termed as the pregnant-grand-mother complex by Mandelbaum (1974). The purpose of the present article is to study the prevalence of such a phenomenon in Eastern Uttar Pradesh on the basis of the data collected in a survey in 1978.

Data and Methodology

A survey entitled "Rural Development and Population Growth—A sample survey" was conducted by the Centre of Population Studies (formerly known as Demographic Research Centre) Banaras Hindu University in the year 1978. The main objective of the survey was to study the existing levels of fertility, mortality and migration in the villages representing different levels of social and economic development. The survey was conducted in 19 villages comprising 3514 households. The fertility schedule defines household as "a group of persons who normally stay together and take food from a common kitchen,

inclusive of persons who usually live outside the village but claim the household to be their own". In the survey apart from other information, the data regarding fertility performance of the couples who are nearing the end of their reproductive period were also obtained. In this context, the data on the age of the youngest child and eldest grand child was also noted. The difference between ages of the above two gives us a picture regarding the impact of the presence of daughters-in-law on the fertility performance of the mothers-in-law.

Findings

Table-1 presents the distribution of the couples according to the difference between the ages of the youngest child and the eldest grand child. It is obvious that some of the differences will be negative also. In all there were 1,283 such couples; however, the data could not be available for 162 couples. From

TABLE 1—DISTRIBUTION OF COUPLES ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AGES OF THEIR YOUNGEST CHILD AND ELDEST GRANDCHILD

<i>Age Difference in years</i>	<i>Positive difference</i>	<i>Negative difference</i>
0	30	0
1	49	27
2	52	32
3	53	16
4	58	15
5	78	8
6	67	8
7	63	2
8-12	239	10
13+	312	2
Total	1001	120
Mean	9.64	3.95

Grand Total : 1283
 N.A. : 162
 8-12 : 10
 13+ : 16

the table, it is seen that out of the total 1,121 couples 1,001 has positive difference i.e. they stopped to reproduce before the incoming of their grand child, while the remaining 120 couples have negative difference i.e. they continued their reproduction even in the presence of their daughters-in-law or after the birth of their grand child. The above leads that 78.02% couples have positive difference showing that a large proportion of the couples try to have sexual abstinence while their sons and daughters begin to reproduce children. The mean positive difference is found to be 9.64 years as well as the mean negative difference as 3.95 years.

Caste

About 95% of the surveyed households were Hindus. The Hindu households in the sample included 35 castes. Keeping in view the large number of castes and too few observations for many of them, the castes have been grouped into 5 categories. The sixth category is formed of muslims. The grouping is based on the similarity of the pattern of living and the relative positions of different castes in the local hierarchy. The groups are as follows:

1. Upper castes : Brahmin, Bhumihaar, Kshatriya, Kayastha, Brahm*
bhata, Gusain and Maha-brahmin.
2. Middle castes : Kurmi, Koiri, Ahir, Gareria.
3. Business castes : Bania, Teli, Thathera, Sonar, Kalwar, Halwai, Barai.
4. Functional castes : Kahar, Kohar, Lohar, Nai, Mali, Mallah, Bind,
Nonia.
5. Scheduled castes : Chamar, Bhar, Khatik, Dharkar, Dhobi, Nat, Pasi
Bhangi, Musahar.

Table 2 presents the caste wise distribution of couples having various age differences between their youngest child and eldest grandchild. The table suggests that there is not much variation in the distribution of above-noted age differences among different caste groups. This may be perhaps because of the fact that we have considered those couples who have already crossed their reproductive age at the time of survey (1978). And such couples are quite old. Hence there may not be much difference in the fertility performance of the couples belonging to different caste groups. The mean positive age differences are found to be 9.80, 9.69, 9.86, 9.72, 9.09 and 10.39 years for Upper, Middle, Business, Functional, Scheduled castes and Muslims respectively. The entire community having positive age difference between their youngest child and eldest grandchild stop to reproduce 9.64 years before the incoming of their grandchild. The distribution of negative age differences between youngest child

TABLE 2-CASTE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF COUPLES HAVING AGE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEIR YOUNGEST CHILD AND ELDEST GRANDCHILD

Age difference between youngest child and eldest grandchild	Positive difference Nagali Caste						Total	Negative difference Caste						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	3	9	1	10	6	1	30							
1	12	13	2	9	10	3	49	X	(5	5	3	0	27
2	7	16	2	14	11	2	52	4	10	2	7	4	5	32
3	12	18	4	8	9	2	53	5	1	0	8	1	1	16
4	9	13	0	15	19	2	58	26		1	2	2	2	15
5	12	27	4	18	15	2	78	21		1	3	0		8
6	10	27	4	16	7	3	67	1	3	0	0	2	2	8
7	10	21	2	17	9	4	63	00		0	2	0	0	2
8-12	40	84	14	41	49	11	239	1	0	1	2	4	2	10
13+	57	97	14	78	48	18	312	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	172	325	47	226	183	48	1001	23	29	10	29	16	13	120
Mean	9.80	9.69	9.86	9.72	9.09	10.39	9.64	3.32	4.22	3.90	3.94	4.87	4.96	3.95

8-12 : 10
13+ : 16

and eldest grandchild indicates that there is a varying degrees of the feeling of disgrace in reproducing child after the birth of grandchild among different caste groups as the couples of Upper, Middle, Business, Functional, Scheduled Castes and Muslims are reproducing child even after 3.32, 4.22, 3.90, 3.94, 4.87 and 4.96 years of the birth of their grandchild. The total average negative age difference between youngest child and eldest grandchild is found to be 3.95 years.

References

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