

Family Planning and Population Growth: Religious, Cultural and Administrative Perspectives



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Abstract

Burgeoning population preceding three decades of attaining independence in India, jolted thinking beings in the country and forced them to ponder on the measures to arrest rapidly growing human number in the country. Resultantly, India embarked on National Program emphasizing Family Planning, to the extent necessary, to reduce birth rate. Thus India became first country in the world to officially adopt family planning in 1952. An empirical study was conducted in the state of Himachal Pradesh with the objectives to know about population growth among different religious groupings and to understand association between religion and adoption of Family Planning and also to examine governmental efforts to control population. Primary information was elicited from adopters and non-adopters of Family Planning with the help of an interview schedule specially designed for this purpose. Men were the unit of study which was conducted using exploratory and descriptive research designs. On application chi-square, a statistical technique, religion was observed to be associated with the adoption of family planning. The Finding goes in line with the successive census data analyzed and interpreted for the period from 1971-2011. It makes amply clear that planners need to focus on the adherents of religion which has consistently been witnessing higher population growth rate and also to develop a culture to adopt family planning measures.

Keywords: Population growth, Family Planning, Religion

Introduction

Historicity of family planning in India can be traced in the pre-historical period. Several ancient religious leaders exhorted in favour of having few children. In Rigveda, the oldest book in the world, it is stated, 'A man with many children succumbs to miseries'. The year 1921 was a milestone in the evolution of family planning in India as a birth control clinic and contraceptive centre was opened by Karve in Bombay and underwent sterilization although he had no issue. The next quarter century witnessed spurt of formation of societies, leagues, associations and organizations committed to promote family planning. Being live to the problem of fast ever growing population which is believed to nullify all developmental achievements, India embarked on national program, emphasizing family planning, to the extent necessary, to reduce birth rate in the first five year plan.¹ But such a swift action of government of India right in the beginning of very first plan have had a long drawn history. India with a population of over 1210 million² is the largest contributor to the world population growth as she accounts for twenty one percent of the seventy eight million annual increments to the global population. This population is much higher than what was targeted in National Population Policy to be achieved (1107 million)³ and projected to be (1162 millions) by the Technical Group on Population Policy by 2010. However, in spite of incurring huge expenses on family planning measures ever since introduction of Family Planning officially about seven decades ago burgeoning population continues to grow at a rate faster than estimated. With this background in mind it was endeavoured to know linkages of population growth and family planning.

Objectives of the Study

Main objectives of this study are as under;

1. To know about population growth among different religious groupings;
2. To understand association between religion and adoption of Family Planning;
3. To examine governmental efforts to control Population.

Methodology

Using exploratory-cum-descriptive design this study was conducted in district Hamirpur which lies in the western part of state of Himachal Pradesh. The district has the distinction of having lowest population growth rate and highest literacy rate ever since its inception in 1972. All the five tehsils namely Tira Sujampur, Nadaun, Hamirpur, Barsar and Bhoranj were included in the study to give representation to the whole district. The study was conducted in the rural areas as about ninety percent of the total population inhabit rural areas. Two most populous villages from each of the five tehsils were chosen. Out of total of about 2800 eligible couples, ten percent i.e. 240 were selected for the study. The requisite information was collected from the males with the help of an interview schedule specially designed for this purpose. Ten Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were organised, with one FGD each in all the sampled village to supplement the information.

Population Growth in India

The dusk of second millennium witnessed India emerging a demographic billionaire on the globe. She joined the 'Demographic Billionaire Club' along with China, with her population crossing the one billion mark on May 11, 1999⁴. The country did not achieve this dubious distinction overnight. It was a result of long drawn journey of one odd million years ever since the existence of human beings on this part of the globe. Her population was 100 million in 300BC, 130 million in 1600 AD, approximately 240 million in 1901 and 360 million in 1951. Net addition of 260 million population was registered in India during 300BC to 1951 AD (Census of India, 1951). There was virtually population explosion in the country during last 1931-1951. One bewilders knowing that while it took almost one million years for India to have a total population of 360 million in 1951, almost equal population was added during the last two decades- 1991-2011⁶. India introduced family planning program in 1952 becoming first country in the world to adopt family planning officially. The Family Planning in Indian witnessed vicissitudes. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched 'Mission Parivar Vikas' in 2017. It aims to reduce Fertility Rate in India to 2.1 by the year 2025⁶. Budgetary provision of Rs. 6.5 million was made in the first five year plan. Its

Table2 Proportion of Religious Communities, India & HP, 1971-11⁸

Religious communities	India/HP	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Hindus	India	87.7	82.6	82.0	80.5	79.8
	HP	96.1	95.8	95.8	95.4	95.2

Every census has registered gradual descendence in the proportion of Hindus but ascendence in the share of Muslims during last four decades in the country. However, proportion of Sikhs and Buddhists has remained more or less the same.

allocation was increased in the successive plans. Whopping Rs. 13 1, 690⁷ have been earmarked for family welfare in the 12th plan.

Decadal Population Growth

The census report 2011 shows that population in India is 1,210 millions where as it is 69 millions in Himachal Pradesh. The population of the state constitutes 0.57 per cent of India's population and ranks 22st position among states and union territories of the country (Census 2011).

Table 1 Decadal Population Growth in India and H.P. 1971-2011

S. No.	Decade	India	Himachal Pradesh
2.	1971-81	24.66	23.71
3.	1981-91	23.86	20.79
4.	1991-01	21.34	17.53
5.	2001-11	17.64	12.81

Source: Census Reports 1971-2011.

The data compressed in table 1 depicts decadal population growth rates in India and Himachal Pradesh during 1971-2011. The data unearths sharper decline in population growth rate in the state as compared to national averages. It is also discernible that population growth rate at national level (17.64%) in 2011 is almost equal to what it was (17.53%) a decade ago (2001) in Himachal Pradesh. Population grew at the highest rate in the country as well as state of Himachal Pradesh during 1971-81. It recorded continuous descendence during all the three successive decades. Decline of Highest percentage points was registered at national and state level during 2001-11. It merits mention here that population growth rate in all the five decades remained above twenty one during 1951-2001 but it declined to 17.64 in 2001-11 in the country.

Proportion of Religious Communities:

Himachal Pradesh has the distinction of having highest proportion of Hindu population among all the states and union territories. Table 2 exhibits religion wise proportion of population in India and state of Himachal Pradesh. The data reveals that the proportion of Hindus has decreased from 82.7 percent in 1971 to 79.8 percent in 2011 at national level. However, proportion of Muslims has increased from 11.2 percent to 14.2 percent during this period. Similarly proportion of Hindus has declined from 96.1 percent to 95.4 percent but in case of Muslims it has ascended from 1.5 percent to 2.0 percent during this period.

Muslims	India	11.2	11.4	12.1	13.4	14.2
	HP	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.2
Sikhs	India	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.7
	HP	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.2
Buddhists	India	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7
	HP	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2

At state level, while proportion of Muslims and Buddhists has been reported to be increasing during 1971-2001, it has shown decline among Hindus.

Population Growth among Religious Communities

'The First Report on Religion Data'¹⁰ presented a wonderful kaleidoscope of the followers of various religious communities at national and state & UT levels. Thus the shrouds of mystery engulfing the socio-economic and demographic profile for each of the main religious group have been removed once for all. The data presented in table3 shows that population growth rate among Hindus has been registered to be significantly lower than those who belong to Muslim religious community in each of the census reports during 1971-2011 in India as well as Himachal Pradesh. It was 16.8 percent among Hindus whereas 24.6 percent among Muslims at national level among these religious communities respectively. Population growth rate among Sikhs has declined from 26.0 percent during 1971-81 to 8.4 percent during 2001-2011. Steep descendance was recorded in population growth rate of Buddhists during 1981-2011 which declined from 35.3% in 1981-1991 to 6.1% during 2001-2011.

Table 3 Population Growth Rate by Religious Community in India, 1971-11¹¹

Religious Communities	1971-81	1981-91	1991-01	2001-11
All religions	24.7	23.9	21.0	17.6
Hindus	21.3	25.1	20.3	16.8
Muslims	22.9	34.5	36.0	24.6
Sikhs	26.0	26.0	18.2	8.4
Buddhists	23.1	35.3	24.5	6.1

It is discernible that population growth among persons professing different religions have been significantly different from each other across decades.

Religion and Adoption of Family Planning

Family planning refers to practices that help individuals or couples to attain certain objectives- to avoid unwanted births, to bring about wanted births, to regulate the intervals between pregnancies and to determine number of children in the family. No doubt India embarked on family planning immediately after attaining independence to arrest the burgeoning population in the country, desired results depended upon adoption and non-adoption of family planning. Adoption in this context refers to ever or current user ship of family planning measures, whereas, non-adoption means that measures of family planning have never been used by either of the member of eligible couple.

Table 4 shows religion wise rate of adoption and non-adoption of family planning. Percentage of adoption of among Hindus was 72.2 which mean about three out of four Hindus have been using some kind of contraception. More than one fourth (27.8%) of Hindus never used any contraceptive method. Reasons for non user ship of family planning measures have been more than one. Some of the

respondents still wanted to have more children. Others believe that children are gift of God. Therefore, there is no need to use contraception to check or regulate births. They believe that it would be sin to take artificial measures to stop the new souls from taking births. Opposition by the spouses on the ground that use of contraceptives is unnatural and also has complication in its uses etc.

Percentage user ship of contraceptives among Muslims is 59.1 which is significantly lower than that of the Hindus. Higher rate of non adoption of contraception was found to be owing to the prevalent belief system that they do not want to interfere with system of almighty. On the other hand adopters appear to have shed the notion that use of artificial measures to regulate conception and births is a sinful act. Rather they have voluntarily adopted family planning measures to have planned family.

Sikhs and Buddhists who are in utter minority in the district have reported 87.8 percent adoption of family planning measures.

Table 4 Religion and Adoption of Family Planning

Nature of adoption	Religion			
	Hindu	Muslim	Others*	Total
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Adopters	151(72.2)	13(59.1)	7(87.8)	171(71.3)
Non-adopters	58(27.8)	9(40.9)	2(22.2)	69(28.7)
Total	209(100.0)	22(100.0)	9(100.0)	240(100.0)

$$X^2 = 5.452 < 0.010$$

*Sikhs & Buddhists

Analysis of data points out to the fact that Muslims have significantly lower adoption of family planning measures than other major and minor religious communities. The present study partly goes in line with findings of Sahoo (2007)¹² who observed that contraceptive prevalence among Hindus is higher than non-Hindus.

Religion has significantly been found to be associated with the adoption of family planning as has been found on the application of chi-square test. It has been observed that calculated value is more than the table value at 1 per cent.

Main Findings

It took almost one million years for India to have a total population of 360 million in 1951, almost equal population was added during the last two decades- 1991-2011. Population growth rates registered gradual descendance at national, state and district level during 1971-2011. It fell below 20 percentage points during 2001-11 in the country, during 1991-2011 in the state and during 1971-2011. Decline of Highest percentage points was registered at national and state level during the last decade.

It is discernible that every census has registered gradual descendance in the proportion of Hindus but ascendance in the share of Muslims during 1971-2011 in the country. However, proportion

of Sikhs and Buddhists has remained more or less the same.

Consistently highest growth rate was recorded among Muslims during all the four decades.

Analysis of data points out to the fact that Muslims have significantly lower adoption of family planning measures than other major and minor religious communities.

On application of chi-square test religion has significantly been found to be associated with the adoption of family planning. It has been observed that calculated value is more than the table value at 1 per cent. Main reason

Conclusion

The people in study area are considerably aware and favorably disposed towards family planning. They still cherish traditional values attached to children. They give highest priority to son over the daughter. At least one son is considered essential in the family. People belonging to different religious communities accord higher status to women who beget sons at first instance.

Religion wise breakup of respondents almost corresponds to their representation at the state level. People are not only having favourable attitude, but they are also increasingly adopting one or the other method of family planning. Those who do not adopt any method of family planning are young and want to complete their family. People who marry late are not keen to adopt of family planning and tend to complete their family before adoption of contraception. It merits mention that NFHS – 5¹³ (National Health Family Survey - 5) is underway which organized state level meeting on 7-11 February 2019. Facts-sheet for Phase-1 in respect of states and Union Territories are

to be generated in December 2019 to January 2020 and Fact – sheets for Phase -2 in November-December 2020.

End Notes

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