

# Effect of occupation and marriage age on small family norms among scheduled castes of Haryana

Subhash Chander and Vinod Kumari  
Department of Sociology, CCS HAU Hisar, Haryana

The sheer increase in human population is one of the most serious problems confronting mankind and the best developmental proposition for India is to stabilize its population which is more sociological in nature than technical. The present study was conducted in a multi caste village and a total of 200 respondents were selected to assess the knowledge and attitude of scheduled caste families towards small family norms. The respondents from service class and those married at later age were having higher knowledge and favourable attitude towards small family norms. About 60% respondents from labour and farming category had 5-8 family members whereas as 50% of service class and other occupation group had less than 5 members. About 60% of the respondents of up to 17 year of age at marriage were having 5-8 members whereas as 47.7% respondents of more than 21 years age group were having small family size. It was concluded that occupation level and marriage age of a person had significant influence on his knowledge and attitude towards small family norms. So efforts are needed for higher education and marriage at later age to achieve the aim of small family.

Keywords: occupation, marriage age, small family norms

The rapidly increasing number of mouths to feed and youngsters to support put heavy pressure on every aspect of the national's economy and well being. The sheer increase in human number hampers the nation's vigorous efforts to alleviate poverty and to raise the standard of living of the general masses. Thus, the problem of rapid population growth is one of the most serious problems confronting mankind and it has gradually assumed frightening proportions, therefore, the best developmental proposition for India is to stabilize its population which is more sociological in nature than technical. The idea that population control is primarily a social problem was first realized in the United State and demography became part and parcel of sociologists studies in that country.

With an introduction of a government programme for family planning in 1951 in the first five year plan, the Indian Government became one of the first in the world to include family planning in its National Policy. In the fourth plan (1969-74) efforts were made to secure social acceptability for a small family norm, enhancing the information and knowledge of people about family planning devices, and making available the necessary devices and equipments for the purpose. In a draft of sixth plan, family planning programme was greatly extended in scope and its name was changed as "Family Welfare Programme" with an integrated approach towards family planning, maternity, child health and nutrition.

It was felt that reduction in population pressure can only be achieved through adoption of small family norm for which a committee was established in 1967 to make recommendation on proposals concerning incentives and disincentives for popularizing and encouraging small family norms. The committee realized that there is no place of force, coercion or compulsion in adoption of small family norm as practicing ideal by our people. The task can only be attained through the process of education, persuasion, facilitation and peoples participation, so that they perceive a small family to be primarily in their personal and family interests. This led to secular changes in our policies pertaining to family planning and

welfare programmes.

In Haryana uncontrolled growth in numbers has wide ranging repercussion on the state as well as for the country. Our achievement have not been to proportion to the infrastructure and economic development. No systematic efforts have been made to identify various determinants of family size in rural areas except a few studies to point out some factors partially attributing to fertility differences but the deep rooted cultural and social factors relevant in the present context have neither been explored fully nor precised. Thus the present study was undertaken to assess the present day knowledge and attitudes of poor schedule caste families towards small family norms and important factors affecting them.

## Method

### *Participants*

The present study was conducted in a multi caste village possessing around 400 households of scheduled castes families. A total of 200 respondents were selected to assess the knowledge and attitude of scheduled castes families towards small family norms. A pre tested interview schedule was used to collect information of respondents on various aspects. The information gathered from respondents was enriched by observations and verification by cross questioning. The data so collected were analyzed and the inferences were drawn with the help of chi square test of significance. The effect of occupations and marriage age of respondents on family size was also studied.

## Results and discussion

### *Contextual Matrix of the Respondents*

The contextual matrix of the respondents is of great importance to understand the social dynamics especially in sociological studies before interpreting the data. It is imperative to know personal, social and economic background of the respondents.

Overwhelming majority of respondents and their wives were illiterate, belonging to nuclear families, labour class and landless (89.5%). Two third majority of respondents were in low income group and were unemployed (94.0%). The mean age at marriage of

male was 17.84 years and his wives age was 14.55 years. A large majority (79%) were having upto 2 male children. Only one daughter was desired in the family by majority of respondents. About 60% of respondents were having family size of 5-8 members and the mean family size was 5.83. It was noticed that 52% couples had favored tubectomy as permanent method of family planning while temporary methods were not much popular among schedule caste families.

*Knowledge about small family norms*

Knowledge level certainly affects the attitude, behaviour and performance of individuals. In order to know the knowledge level of rural scheduled caste people, simple questions were asked about small family norms and family welfare like the knowledge about how many children are sufficient for happy family, consequences of increasing family size, family welfare techniques, is it available or not, who will be benefited by family welfare programmes. Besides these small family norms issues, questions like techniques of family planning were also asked. Their total knowledge score was obtained and it was divided into four categories i.e. low, moderately low, moderately high and high.

It was found that hundred per cent respondents had heard about small family norms (SNF). About one-third of the respondents gave three reasons of SFN namely to have gap between children, to have only 2 children and happiness of the family followed by those giving two reasons (51.5%) and one reason (16%). The common reason mentioned by all respondents for SFN was that they wanted to adopt SFN for having only two children. So the concept of two children

was among the respondents as also reported earlier by Kumari (1986) . However, when asked about sufficient number of children in the family, one third of the respondents told that two children were sufficient in the family followed by three children (59.5%) and four children (24%). Cent per cent of the respondents were in favour of checking population growth as all of them were aware of the consequences of population increase. When asked about the real benefits of family planning techniques, three-fourth of the respondents told that individual, his family and society as a whole would be benefited by the family welfare techniques, whereas only one fourth of the respondents were of the view that mainly family unit will be benefited.

*Association of occupation and marriage age with knowledge level towards small family norms*

The occupation of a person is generally affected by various factors like education level, family environment, and personal needs. The effect of occupation on knowledge level of respondents towards small family norms is presented in Table 1. More than two-fifth of respondents belonging to labour and share farming group were having moderately low level of knowledge towards small family norms. Half of the respondents of farming group were having high level of knowledge. About two-third (58.4%) of the respondents from service group were having high level of knowledge whereas, 44.5 % of the respondents of other group (Handicraft, Shopkeeper, Mochi etc.) were having high level of knowledge.

*Table 1 Relationship of occupation and marriage age with knowledge level towards small family norms*

Social Factor	Knowledge levels				
	Low	Moderately Low	Moderately High	High	Total
<b>Occupation</b>					
Labour	30(22.9)	54(41.2)	47(35.9)	0(0.0)	131(65.5)
Share Farming	4(14.8)	12(44.4)	8(29.6)	3(11.2)	27(13.5)
Farming	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	3(24.9)	6(50.2)	12(6.0)
Service	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	4(33.3)	7(58.4)	12(6.0)
Others	0(0.0)	2(11.1)	8(44.4)	8(44.5)	18(9.0)
					$\chi^2$ 63.05*
<b>Respondents' age of marriage</b>					
Upto 17 years	23(25.8)	32(36.0)	32(36.0)	2(2.2)	89(44.5)
18-21 years	12(13.3)	34(37.8)	35(38.9)	9(10.0)	90(45.0)
Above 21 years	0(0.0)	6(28.6)	10(47.6)	5(23.8)	21(10.5)
					$\chi^2$ 163.20*
<b>Respondents' wives' age at marriage</b>					
Upto 14 years	22(26.2)	28(33.3)	28(33.3)	6(7.2)	84(42.0)
15-18 years	13(12.2)	43(40.6)	43(40.6)	7(6.6)	106(53.0)
Above 18 years	0(0.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(5.0)
					$\chi^2$ 110.96*

It was observed that as the occupation status increased their knowledge level towards small family norms was also increased. Chi-square results were highly significant showing the association of occupation with knowledge level as also reported earlier by Dutta and Seol (1974) and Kaur and Singh (1982). The respondents from service group were having high level of knowledge as compared to other occupational categories. This might be due to their education, urban exposure and more outside contacts. Srivastva (1991) also

reported that white collar workers, educated and enlightened class facilitate the acceptance of small family norms more quickly.

The respondents' age at marriage depicted that 36% respondents who married up to 17 years were having moderately low level of knowledge about small family norms, while 39 per cent of the respondents of 18-21 years were having moderately high level of knowledge. About 47 per cent of respondents of above 21 years group were having moderately high level of knowledge. This clearly

indicated that when marriage was done at later age then their knowledge level about small family norms also increased as also indicated by significant chi-square value.

In case of respondents' wives' age at marriage, one third of the respondents' wives of upto 14 years category were having moderately low level of knowledge towards small family norms. About 41% respondents of 15-18 years group were having moderately low level of knowledge. Two-third of the respondents of above 18 years were having moderately high level of education. Thus we can conclude that if age of the respondents' wives increases then level of knowledge towards small family norms also increases. Similarly, Ahmed et. al. (1988) also revealed that increase in the age at marriage of females will certainly give a positive response in the rate of adoption of family planning and will result in reduction of family size in future. Youssef (2005) suggested the need to reinforce the minimum age at marriage and also pointed towards concerted efforts to encourage modern contraceptives and extended breast feeding to promote small family size.

#### *Attitude towards small family norms*

Attitude has a powerful influence on one's behaviour. In general term, attitudes refer to the likes and dislikes of the individuals. The actions of an individual are governed to a great extent by his attitudes. One cannot see attitudes directly. They are inferred indirectly through the actions and words of a person. With the aim to measure the attitude of respondents towards family planning, a scale was used. As the success of notion of small family norms ultimately depend upon the acceptance by the people at large, their beliefs, attitudes or rejection. Assessment of people's attitude can help make use of the limited resources and plan out the future strategy in such a way that the group of people which have not yet realized the implications of such programmes is made the focus of attention.

A majority of the respondents were in favour of small family norms and two third of them described five members as optimum family size followed by 23.5% each to have four and six members in their family, respectively. Only 13.5% respondents wanted to have seven members in their family. The respondents were in favour of small family, mainly because of health and happiness of the children, health for mother, better life of children and economic reason. One of the most widely accepted reason of having many children was the financial, physical and emotional security in old age. It was noticed that majority of the respondents wanted to adopt family planning methods only when there were more males than females in the family.

#### *Association of occupation and marriage age with attitude towards small family norms.*

Occupation of a person is expected to influence his family size decisions by influencing his desires, motivations and aspiration in life and perceived cost and benefits from a large number of children. In order to examine the attitude towards family size by occupational status the results have been cited in Table 2. Two-third of the respondents of labour category and 70% of share farming category were having neutral attitude towards small family norms. Two-third majority of the respondents of farming category and three-fourth of service class were having favourable attitude. It was noticed that occupation was positively correlated with small family norms. Chi-square results were highly significant showing the association of occupation with attitude towards small family norm as also reported

earlier by Gulati (1987).

There is also an implicit explanation of differential fertility in Marshall's argument, "Efficient labour requires an objectively determined higher standard of living and the rearing of an efficient (skilled) labourer will be some multiple of the cost of rearing an inefficient labourer. Due to lack of adequate compensation or limited demand for skilled labour, the standard of living of efficient worker is threatened and they respond to this situation by the curtailing the size of the family". As mentioned by Banerjee (1978) in her article on family planning that untouchables, who comprised the core of the agricultural labour force of manpower, their income dependent upon the amount of work each family could contract during the busy season and higher savings for the slow reason, "A large family means a greater income during the busy seasons and higher savings for the slow reason". Nanavati et. al. (2006) that educated girls aspiring for higher occupation preferred one son and one daughter to have an ideal family and wanted a permanent method of contraceptive after completion of family.

*Table 2. Relationship of occupation and marriage age with attitude towards small family norms.*

Variables	Attitude			Total
	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable	
<b>Occupation</b>				
Labour	21(16.0)	89(68.0)	21(16.0)	131(65.5)
Share farming	4(14.8)	19(70.4)	4(14.8)	27(13.5)
Farming	8(66.7)	3(25.0)	1(8.3)	12(6.0)
Services	9(75.0)	3(25.0)	0(0.0)	12(6.0)
Others	6(33.3)	11(61.1)	1(5.6)	18(9.0)
				$\chi^2=46.31^{**}$
<b>Respondents' age at marriage</b>				
Upto 17 years	15(16.8)	64(72.0)	10(11.2)	89(44.5)
18-21 years	23(25.5)	51(56.7)	16(17.8)	90(45.0)
Above 21 years	10(47.6)	10(47.6)	1(4.8)	21(10.5)
				$\chi^2=91.87^{**}$
<b>Respondents' wives' age at marriage</b>				
Upto 14 years	19(22.6)	56(66.7)	9(10.7)	84(42.0)
15-18 years	25(23.0)	63(59.4)	18(17.0)	106(53.0)
Above 18 years	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	0(0.0)	10(5.0)
				$\chi^2=54.05^{**}$

The age at marriage has a great influence on one's attitude towards small family norms. The results presented in Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents (72%) of age category of upto 17 years and 57% of age category of 18-21 years were having neutral attitude towards small family norms. However, in case of age category of more than 21 years, forty eight per cent respondents were having favourable attitude. Thus it is clear there is a favorable attitude towards SFN with advancement of age at marriage.

In case of respondents' wives' age at marriage, a majority of the respondents' wives' (67%) of age group of 14 years and about three-fifth of 15-18 years age group were having neutral attitude towards SFN. Favourable attitude was reported by 40% of respondents' from above 18 years category. It indicated some favourable attitude towards small family norms with advancement of wives' age at marriage. Almost similar findings were observed by Goyal (1990). Nanavati (2006) also reported a favourable trend in marriage age in Gujarat State and found that most of girls preferred to get married

after the age of 21 years. Harbour (2011) reported that young males in neighborhood where more people desire a small family were 33% more likely to desire a small family than males of other areas. He concluded that household and neighborhood levels had significant influence on attitude of young males towards small family norms.

### *Association of occupation and marriage age with family size*

The National Family Planning Programme has contributed to the large scale awareness about family planning, contraceptives and available facilities. Along with this, the small family norms have also spread among the eligible couples and have become a synonym with economic growth. One of the arguments in favour of small family is that it enables families to ensure better future to the members of the family.

According to custom and tradition marriage is a universal in Asian countries. Marriage is not merely a necessary social institution but a quasi-religious duty. In Hinduism, the dominant religion of the region, marriage is vested with religious significance and sacrificial virtue, "every Hindu must marry and be get children-sons if you please - to perform his funeral rites, lest his spirit should wander uneasily in vacant place of the earth". The various factors have contributed toward varying family sizes. Now the question arises as to how and by what process these factors like occupation and marriage age affect family size. The results are presented in Table 3.

Every occupation has a set of sub-cultural traits which are traditionally associated with a particular occupation and passed onto those who enter that occupation. The occupational culture includes beliefs, attitudes, rituals and other such elements. Laboring has been the main occupation of rural scheduled castes families who desired for more number of children to look after different work in the agriculture and non-agriculture fields.

Occupational status of the male is all the more important in a barely literate society, where male is the main bread winner. And in our society, where patriarchal families are in vogue, the status of women is still low. Furthermore, her own status in home is more often subordinated to that of her husband, irrespective of her occupational or employment status. The data enfolded in Table 3 revealed that more than 60 per cent of the respondents of share farming and labour occupation were having family size of 5-8 members. Nearly sixty per cent of the respondents of farming were having family size of 5-8 members. In contrast, 50% of the respondents of services and others occupation group were having small family size. The results highlighted that among labour and share farming children were valued as a source of extra income and work while they were not valued as much in service category, where the emphasis was revealed on well being of the family. These findings were in accordance with Aggarwal (1970), Arora (1990) and Rob (1992) which also brought out that man's occupational status as inversely related to family size. By contrast, Chatterjee (1971) explained that the dependence on sons to provide social security in old age, keep the desire with a son alive in Indian families. Chi-square results also indicated that relationship between occupation and family size is significant.

The striking characteristics of the marriage pattern in India have been the early age at marriage. About 60% of the respondents of up to 17 year of age at marriage and 18-21 years were having 5-8 members where as 47.7% respondents of more than 21 years age group were having small family size. Chi square results were highly significant

showing the association of marriage age with family size. Respondents married at higher age were having smaller families. The same trend was also found by Arora (1990), Malhi (1993) and Mutharayapa (1994).

Since marriage provides a socially sanctioned opening for imitation of sexual activity and child bearing, the age at which the women marry constitute an important factor in the population growth. About 60% of the respondents' wives of up to 14 years age group were having 5-8 family members whereas half of respondents from above 18 years group were having small family size. Chi-square results were also subject showing the association of family size with wives age of marriage. Arora (1990) also reported that women who marry later than the average may be less fertile than the average, not only because their reproductive life is curtailed by the postponement of their marriage, but also, possibly because they are less fecund.

*Table 3: Association of occupation and marriage age with family size.*

Variables	Family size			
	0-4	5-8	Above 8	Total
<b>Occupation</b>				
Labour	35(26.7)	79(60.3)	17(13.0)	131(65.5)
Share farming	3(11.1)	19(70.4)	5(18.5)	27(13.5)
Farming	3(38.3)	7(58.5)	1(8.2)	12(6.0)
Service	6(50.0)	6(50.0)	0(0.0)	12(6.0)
Others	9(50.0)	8(44.4)	1(5.6)	18(9.0)
$\chi^2 = 70.39^*$				
<b>Respondent's age of marriage</b>				
Upto 17 years	27(30.3)	54(60.7)	8(9.0)	89(44.5)
18-21 years	20(22.2)	56(62.2)	14(15.6)	90(45.0)
Above 21 years	10(47.6)	9(42.9)	2(9.5)	21(10.5)
$\chi^2 = 90.87^*$				
<b>Respondent's wives' age of marriage</b>				
Upto 14 years	12(14.3)	50(59.5)	22(26.2)	84(42.0)
15-18 years	40(37.7)	64(60.4)	2(1.9)	106(53.0)
Above 18 years	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	-	10(5.0)
$\chi^2 = 74.62^*$				

Thus, from the interplay of different factors, it can be inferred that social and cultural values play an important role for which attitudinal changes are necessary for attainment of national objectives and growth "prosperity". The knowledge and attitude of population towards small family norms is influenced by complex socio-economic attributes. It was concluded that occupation level and marriage age of a person has significant influence on his knowledge and attitude towards small family norms. It might be due to his educational level, outside exposure for job and brain maturity with adult of age. So efforts are needed to higher education and marriage at later age for successful implementation of family planning programme.

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