

Book Reviews

S. C. Gulati. *Fertility in India: An Econometric Analysis of a Metropolis*. New Delhi/Newbury Park/London. Sage Publications. 1988.

The main focus of the book is on the description of analytical findings of a study based on a demographic survey of Delhi conducted in 1970. The considerations for analysis of data collected from 5,624 currently married females aged below 40 years at the time of the survey, included the testing of several hypotheses on socio-economic factors affecting fertility behaviour. The book, apart from containing an interesting foreword by Ashish Bose, consists of seven chapters and appendices. One of the chapters provides a review of the theories and issues concerning the factors and conditions influencing fertility behaviour. Another chapter relates to the demographic literature on fertility and family planning within India and provides a brief history of the regional surveys including those which were primarily designed to investigate various socio-economic, psychological and demographic variables affecting fertility and family planning.

The author has highlighted the emphasis placed by many scholars on the need for motivating people in the use of contraceptives for reducing fertility, He has also mentioned that the official family planning programme is often criticised for its inability to promote the motivational aspects. While pointing out the fact that awareness and availability of contraceptives may not effectively control fertility, the author very rightly emphasises the need for an integrated effective plan for transforming the attitude and behaviour towards reducing fertility keeping in view the role of different socio-economic, cultural and demographic variables. Although the author of the book has outlined some critical issues raised by different scholars regarding the lack of effective changes in motivation for fertility behaviour, one major omission in the book is the description of the demographic parameters for India as a whole (because the title of the book mentions fertility in India) as well as for the Delhi metropolitan area. Even if the focus of the book is on the interrelationships between these parameters, such important background information would have given the reader a clear picture of the demographic and related perspectives of the study and the issues mentioned by the author.

Although one finds that the author in reviewing literature has mostly relied on the older studies (possibly because the survey itself was carried out in 1970), yet some interesting findings have been quoted from studies, which relate fertility to

economic status (fertility differentials indicating smallest family among agricultural labourers and highest for small cultivators); to education; to age at marriage and to religion. Studies on fertility differentials by religion are contradictory, some showed higher fertility among muslims in India than among hindus, while others indicated the difference between the two groups are marginal and that educational and socio-economic development reduce such differences if any. Another important finding mentioned by the author is that "although some muslims give religious reasons for not controlling fertility, their approval and participation in the family planning programme shows that religion is not expressedly opposed to it. Or, possibly the dictates of religion barring abortion or sterilisation are not strictly adhered to with educational and socio-economic development" [p. 53]. Also that the operative forces are more economic and educational rather than directly religious. The findings of different studies on the role of son preference and survival of children from risks of death during infancy in fertility behaviour confirm a generally observed pattern not only in India but also in other developing countries including Pakistan.

The author's own analyses of fertility-related variables and their determinants from the Delhi Demographic survey consist firstly, of factorial investigations for different age groups of thirty-four variables were made to understand how different aspects of individual fertility behaviour are explained by the key factors. Age has been identified as an important life stage variable influencing fertility behaviour and contraceptive use. Secondly, the analysis provided in the book deals with the development of a structural model of fertility behaviour so that the statistical importance of the different factors indicated by the factorial analysis is further investigated to determine the link with fertility behaviour. This aspect of the study showed that the relative importance of the principal determinants of fertility behaviour is highest in the age group 25–29 years. This age group, according to the author, is crucial for serious decision-making about the desired family size and adjustments in the family size are made during the remaining part (after this age group) of the reproductive period. The main results of the study indicated female education as the principal determinant of cumulative fertility. This finding confirms similar findings from various studies conducted the world over, which have led to a reinforced emphasis on enhancing female education by various governments as well as international organisations including the United Nations and the World Bank.

Among the other factors permanent income, respondent's opportunity cost measured by income, father's occupation, proportion of sons etc. were indicated to be crucial after age 30 years, in determining fertility adjustment behaviour. Further analyses led the author to infer that the female's father's educational hierarchy has a repressive impact on her reproductive behaviour, especially among the younger cohorts of the respondent women. However, the ultimate multiplier effects of contraceptive use and respondent female's educational attainments are pronounced.

Son preference has a substantial on cumulative fertility all through the reproductive span. The author's conclusion from the analyses of the survey data are that the principal determinants of cumulative fertility and effective contraception are educational attainment, contraceptive usage, son preference and female employment. Of these, the author feels that the mitigation of son preference, educational improvement among women and extensive use of contraceptive methods are the principal policy variables to be manipulated immediately.

While the findings of the study only reconfirm the inferences drawn from other research studies carried out in various developing countries, what is interesting in the book is the comprehensive way in which data from a metropolitan survey has been analysed. The book provides a useful reference for the researchers who are interested in using econometric modelling to understand various dimensions of demographic and socio-economic interactions. The issue of serious concern, however, is that despite the early recognition lead by India in carrying out official family planning programmes with increasing allocation of funds for this purpose, there has been no spectacular decline in the birth rate of the country. The pessimism expressed in Ashish Bose's foreword to the book about the family planning programmes in the several large states in India points towards the inadequacies and failures of the programmes of direct state intervention to curb the birth rate. Although Bose mentions the shifting of focus by policy-makers and planners to people's participation in developmental programmes, including those relating to health and family welfare, in conclusion he also states that "there is a tendency to stick to the ongoing programmes and seek more funds for family welfare and measure success only in terms of the number of sterilised women, regardless of its impact on the birth rate" [p. 17]. This is an important and realistic observation by an experienced senior Indian demographer which should not be taken as pertinent to the Indian situation alone, but also relevant for other countries, including Pakistan, where large official and non-official family planning programmes have brought about grossly inadequate success in bringing down the birth rate.

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