

**S.S. COLLEGE, JEHANABAD
(GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT)**

B.A. PART - 3 (POPULATION GEOGRAPHY : PAPER - 7)

TOPIC : FACTORS AFFECTING FERTILITY

- Prof. KUMARI NISHA RANI

(DATE: 06/07/2020)

Fertility is the natural capability to produce offspring. As a measure, fertility rate is the number of offspring born per mating pair, individual or population. Fertility differs from fecundity, which is defined as the *potential* for reproduction (influenced by gamete production, fertilization and carrying a pregnancy to term). A lack of fertility is infertility while a lack of fecundity would be called sterility.

Main Factors Affecting the Fertility are:

- 1. Biological Factors**
- 2. Physiological Factors**
- 3. Social Factors**
- 4. Economic Factors**
- 5. Family Planning.**

1. Biological Factors:

Biological factors like age and sex are very important in affecting fertility. Fecundity depends on the woman and her age. It is only the woman who can bear a child with the onset of menstruation. This process

stops when menopause begins. Thus the onset of menstruation and menopause are the biological limits to fertility in the case of a woman. The start of the first menstrual period, known as menarche, depends on climate, health, food, etc.

In cold climate, it may start at the age of 15 years whereas in hot climate at the age of 10 years. It may start earlier in the case of a healthy girl and late in a weak and ailing girl. The reproductive span of females is 30-35 years. But it is not uniform. In the early years, their fecundity is low.

It is the highest between 20 to 25 years. After that, it starts declining slowly up to 38 years and then rapidly till the age of 49-50 years when it totally stops. There are no such limits in the case of a male who can beget children even in old age. So fertility depends upon biological factors like age and sex.

2. Physiological Factors:

There are physiological factors which affect the fecundity period of women. They are in fact, the periods in the reproductive pattern of a woman when she is not able to conceive and is sterile. Sterility in a woman may be due to a number factors. In societies where a girl is married at an early age, the interval between cohabitation and the birth of the first child is longer because the girl is not developed physically to bear the child.

This is called adolescent sterility. Besides, there are certain periods when a woman does not conceive after the birth of a child. She is temporarily sterile. It takes a few months for a woman to resume the menstrual cycle without which she cannot conceive. Where breastfeeding is practised, the birth of the other child is delayed during that period.

Some couples may have primary sterility. They may not have any child throughout their lives either by choice or due to their inability. There

may also be secondary sterility when due to an accident, infection, disease or any other impairment, the couple is unable to give birth to a child. Fertility is also affected by abortion, deliberate or natural, and still births.

3. Social Factors:

Social factors like religion, caste, race, family system, education, status of woman, etc. also influence fertility in a country.

(a) Religion:

Religion affects fertility in many societies. In Asian countries, marriage is a social institution and a religious duty. Hence, it is universal. Religion expects every couple to have at least a son and a daughter. The birth of a son is essential for the salvation of Hindu parents and the marriage (Kanyadan) of a daughter is a religious and social obligation. Certain religions permit polygamy, as in the case of Muslims, whereby a man can marry more than one wife. This naturally increases fertility.

(b) Caste System:

In societies where the caste system dominates, fertility is high as compared with those where it is not prevalent. In India, the birth rate is high in the case of lower castes, while it is low among high caste Hindus. This is because the former marry girls at an early age due to their depressed economic condition. On the other hand, the upper castes prefer to educate girls both in rural and urban areas before marrying them.

(c) Family System:

Family system affects fertility in different ways. In societies where the joint family system prevails, whether fertility is high or low depends upon the economic condition of the family. If the family is rich and has ample accommodation for the couples, fertility is high. Reverse is the case in a poor family with little accommodation. This is the position in all Asian countries where the joint family system is prevalent.

On the other hand, in a single family system where the couple lives alone, fertility is low because it is difficult to bring up many children. It is still low in those societies where both husband and wife are employed. Such a situation exists in all the developed countries and in a few cases in developing countries.

(d) Education:

Education plays an important role in influencing fertility. In countries where the percentage of literates is high, fertility is low. That is why the birth rate is low in developed countries. The educated couple prefers a very small family.

It understands the use and importance of various family planning devices. Moreover, the span of child-bearing is reduced considerably in the case of a girl who receives education for a number of years and marries at a ripe age.

(e) Status of Women:

Fertility is also affected by the status of women in a society. In India before Independence, women who produced more children were held in high esteem. Even in the present, this is so in certain communities in rural India. In all such cases, the women are confined only to household work.

4. Economic Factors:

Economic factors like urbanisation, occupation of the family and overall economic conditions have much affect on fertility.

(a) Urbanisation:

Urbanisation affects fertility of the people differently as compared with rural areas. Fertility declines with urbanisation. This is caused by lack of accommodation and high cost of living in the case of those who migrate from rural areas.

They have high fertility because children start earning at an early age and thus augment family income. Those engaged in white-collar jobs want to educate their children but cannot afford to have many due to the high cost of living.

The better-off also want fewer children to maintain their standard of living. When both husband and wife are employed, they cannot have more than one child, if there is nobody to look after the child in their absence. Even the cost of keeping children in creches and of baby-sitters in big cities dissuades them to have another child.

(b) Occupation:

Occupation determines the economic condition of a family which, in turn, affects fertility. Manual workers have high fertility because to supplement the family income, they want more working hands in the form of children. But those engaged in business, trading and in white-collar jobs have low fertility.

Where women are also employed along with men, fertility is low, as is the case in developed countries. But farmers in rural areas have high fertility as compared with non-farm population. Both farmers and farm workers have high fertility because the farmers being rich can afford more children, whereas the farm workers need more children to help them in farming operations in order to earn more. But artisans, petty traders, etc. in rural areas have comparatively low fertility because of their low earning capacity.

(c) Economic Conditions:

The economic conditions of a country influence fertility considerably. In developed countries, per capita income and standard of living being high, fertility is low. People prefer to maintain their high standard of living instead of having more children which involve high costs in bringing up and educating them. But the poor in developed

countries have high fertility because they want more children to support the family.

The same is the case in underdeveloped countries both in agricultural and industrial sectors. The cost of bringing up a child is much less than the benefit to the family from a child when he or she starts earning at a very young age.

Similarly, the fertility among rich farmers is high because they can afford to have more children. But in cities, except in the case of the poor, the fertility is low. The industrialist, the businessman, the salaried class all want to maintain their respective standard of living, rather want to raise it. With high cost of living, they find it difficult to bring up more children. So fertility is low among them.

5. Family Planning:

One of the important factors affecting fertility is family planning. Among other factors, developed countries have been able to bring down their fertility rates by voluntarily adopting family planning devices. But in underdeveloped countries, both men and women are reluctant to use contraceptives due to social taboos and restrictions, ignorance, poverty, proper education, etc.

Despite the best efforts of governments and private organisations in many developing countries, family planning programmes have not been successful. Consequently, fertility is high in such countries.

* _____ *