

POPULATION CENTRE BANGALORE

Occasional Papers

SERIES No. 2

**CHANGES OVER A GENERATION IN FERTILITY LEVELS
AND VALUES IN KARNATAKA**

**A Comparison of Salient Findings from the Mysore
Population Study (1951) and the Bangalore Population
Study (1975)**

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1977

Preface

There has been a general feeling among academicians as well as administrators engaged in the formulation and implementation of family planning programme in India that the impact of the programme on fertility has not been commensurate with the enormous inputs in terms of personnel, financial resources and time invested in the programme. Though India can take legitimate pride in the fact that it was the first country in the world to declare a national demographic goal, and to launch an official programme of family planning, the time by which the targetted birth rate of 25 per mille was to be reached had to be deferred to a later and later date in each successive five-year plan. The present demographic goal is to reach the birth rate of 25 per mille by 1984. If the recent trends in the performance of family planning programme continue in future it is unlikely that this goal will be realised even by 1984. Analysis with data on births averted because of a certain number of acceptors taking to modern methods of family planning within the programme indicates that the observed birth rate declines do not match with births averted and the former are less than the latter.

In Karnataka State, it is found that the birth rate has been declining rather quite slowly, coming down from an estimated level of 40 in 1951 to about 35 in 1975. The bulk of this reduction appears to be due to structural changes in the population in age-sex distribution, and the real reductions in marital fertility appear to be only 5 to 6%. Computations reveal that the reductions in marital fertility that can be expected because of couples accepting family planning methods from within the programme should be of the order of 10%. There appears to have developed a situation wherein the potential fertility rates of married women in the State are changing or have changed in the past generation in the context of modernization.

The *Mysore Population Study* that was carried out in the then State of Mysore in 1951 and the *Bangalore Population Study* carried out by the Population Centre, Bangalore, in 1975 in an overlapping area of Karnataka State offer a unique opportunity for comparing the fertility patterns of the women in the *Mysore Population Study*, in different geographical regions, with the fertility patterns of women living in the same terrains in 1975, almost a

generation later. Comparison of findings from these two studies provides a rare data-base to study changes in the fertility patterns, attitudes to family size, knowledge and practice of family planning methods of couples in the reproductive ages in the area over a period of one generation. The findings indicate that while there has been a substantial increase in the knowledge and practice of modern methods of family planning in the area, attitudes to number of children desired and ideal family size have not changed to the same extent. It is also observed that the practice of traditional methods of family planning which was quite well prevalent before 1950 has declined very sharply with very few couples practising, nay, even aware of, by the year 1975, of these methods. Modernization seems to have set in motion a chain of changes in the socio-cultural practices of the population and has tended to release some of the traditional checks on fertility and this appears to be a major factor responsible for only a marginal decline in the marital fertility rates of women, even in the context of a strong family planning programme.

This monograph is the second in the series of *Occasional Papers* published by the Population Centre, and it is hoped that it will be useful in stimulating discussions on the extent to which modernization can contribute to an increase in the potential fertility of women in a society where culture and social conditions have exercised strong checks on fertility, either directly or indirectly, for long time in the past.

The authors wish to thank their colleagues in the Population Centre, especially the Research Assistants and Field Investigators who were responsible for the collection of data, under trying circumstances in the field, for the *Bangalore Population Study*. Special thanks are due to H.S. Surendra, Keshava, G. B. Venkatesha Murthy, Sholapurkar and Manjula Devi who assisted us in the presentation of tables.

Bangalore

19 December 1977

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