

Chapter IV

Background of Study Population

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes socio-economic and demographic profile of young married women. Initially information about their age, education, occupation and mass media exposure as well as of their husbands was asked from the women themselves. Subsequently information on household characteristics like type of house, caste, religion, availability of drinking water, sanitation facility, electricity, fuel used for cooking, ownership of household assets, family income and migration of husband was collected. Young women were also asked about their marital duration, mental readiness for marriage, number of living children, experience of infant death and pregnancy outcome. Most of these background variables are expected to have influence on their reproductive and infant health care behaviour. This chapter also provides brief profile of the women involved in the qualitative data collection, i.e., focus group discussions.

4.2. Socio-economic profile of women

As described in the previous chapter, a sample of 324 young married women (aged 15-24 years) from the rural areas of Gajapati district, Odisha were interviewed for the study. They had a pregnancy outcome within one year preceding the survey. Of the total women, 22 had abortions, nine had still-births and 293 had live births. Unfortunately, of the live births, 7 babies died by the time of the survey. Among the available 286 infants, about 30 per cent were aged between four and six months, 25 per cent between one and three months, 21 per cent between ten and 12 months, 16 per cent between seven and nine months and 9 per cent are below one month.

Table 4.2.1 furnishes socio-economic characteristics of women and their husbands, as reported by the young married women.

Table 4.2.1: Socio-economic characteristics of young women and their husbands

Socio-economic characteristics	Percentage	Number of women
Age of women		
15-19 years	29.6	96
20-24 years	70.4	228
Mean age	21 years	--
Age of husbands		
20-24 years	25.3	82
25-29 years	50.3	163
30 years and above	24.4	79
Mean age	27 years	--
Education level of women		
No education	35.2	114
Classes 1-5 (primary)	17.9	58
Classes 6-8 (middle)	23.1	75
Classes 9 and above (secondary and above)	23.8	77
Education level of husbands		
No education	21.6	70
Classes 1-5 (primary)	11.1	36
Classes 6-8 (middle)	22.5	73
Classes 9 and above (secondary and above)	44.8	145
Occupation of women		
Home maker/Housewife	78.7	255
Others ¹	21.3	69
Occupation of husbands		
Daily wage labourers	53.1	172
Business/Self-employment	21.0	68
Others ²	25.9	84
Total	100.0	324

Note: ¹ Others include daily wage earners/Agriculture labourers, business and service.

² Others include unemployed, students and service.

Age of women: Of the women interviewed, a majority of them (70 per cent) were aged 20 to 24 years, their mean age being 21 years.

Age of husbands: Half of the women reported that their husbands were aged between 25 and 29 years, and about one-fourth them said their husbands were more than 30 years. The mean age of husbands of young women was 27 years.

Education of women: About 35 per cent of young women have not studied at all, while 18 per cent have studied maximum up to Class V. Nearly 23 per cent women studied between Classes VI and VIII and almost the same proportion of women studied beyond Class IX.

Education of husbands: Twenty two per cent the women reported that their husbands have not studied at all. Eleven per cent of them have studied up to Class V and 23 per cent between Classes VI to VIII. However, 45 per cent husbands of young women have studied up to Classes IX and above.

Occupation of women: More than three-fourths of the young women are home makers while the remaining work either as daily wage labourers or do some business or are employed.

Occupation of husbands: Husbands of more than half the women were daily wage earners, husbands of 21 per cent women were engaged in business and the remaining 26 per cent husbands were either unemployed or employed in the service sector.

4.3. Household characteristics of women

Table 4.3.1 provides information about selected household characteristics of women interviewed for the present study.

Types of houses: More than half of the women (57 per cent) resided in *pucca* houses, while only 28 per cent had *kachha* houses. The remaining 15 per cent women lived in *semi-pucca* houses.

Types of families: About 35 per cent women resided in nuclear families⁶ and 65 per cent of them in non-nuclear or joint families.

Caste: The study area has a high concentration of scheduled castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the population. About 40 per cent of the women are of SCs, 30 per cent of OBCs, 16 per cent of STs, and 14 per cent of general castes.

Religion: Hindu and Christian are two major religions which are followed by about 53 per cent and 45 per cent of the population respectively. Very few (2 per cent) women were Muslims.

⁶ Married couples living with their unmarried children.

Table 4.3.1: Household characteristics of young women

Household characteristics	Percentage	Number of women
Types of houses		
Kachcha	28.1	91
Semi-Pucca	14.8	48
Pucca	57.1	185
Types of families		
Nuclear	34.9	113
Non-nuclear	65.1	211
Caste		
Scheduled Castes (SCs)	39.2	127
Scheduled Tribes (STs)	15.7	51
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	30.9	100
General castes	14.2	46
Religion		
Hindu	53.1	172
Muslim	1.9	6
Christian	45.1	146
Main sources of drinking water		
River/Pond	0.3	1
Stream/Canal	0.0	0
Open well	54.6	177
Pipe/Tap	9.9	32
Tube/Bore well	35.2	114
Type of toilet facility available in house		
No toilet facility	75.0	243
Pit latrine	20.1	65
Flush latrine	4.9	16
Households having electricity		
Yes	88.6	287
No	11.4	37
Average monthly family income (Rs.)		
3000 or less	30.2	98
3001 to 6000	38.3	124
6001 to 9000	13.6	44
9001 or more	17.9	58
Standard of living		
High standard of living	8.3	27
Medium standard of living	60.5	196
Low standard of living	31.2	101
Husband staying outside (temporarily migrated)		
Yes	28.4	92
No	71.6	232
Total	100.0	324

Source of drinking water: The major source of drinking water for more than half of the total households is open well, followed by bore or tube well (35 per cent). About 10 per cent women depend on piped/tapped water for drinking purposes.

Availability of toilet facility: Seventy-five per cent women reported that toilet facility was not available in the house and they used open spaces in the village for the needful. Only 5 per cent households had flush and 20 per cent households had pit latrines.

Availability of electricity: Majority of the households (89 per cent) had supply of electricity.

Average monthly family income: More than two-thirds of the households have an average monthly income of less than Rs. 6000 and about half of them have even less than Rs. 3000, which is very low. Fourteen per cent of the households have an average income of Rs. 6001 to Rs. 9000 a month and 18 per cent of them have more than Rs. 9000 as average income which seems to be manageable for small families in a rural setting.

Standard of Living Index (SLI): SLI has been developed on the basis of selected household characteristics, ownership of livestock and household assets. Very few women (8 per cent) belong to high SLI category, while more than 60 per cent of them are in medium SLI category. There are about 31 per cent women who belong to low SLI category.

Husbands staying outside: Twenty eight per cent young women had husbands who were staying outside or temporarily migrated⁷ elsewhere for better economic prospects.

4.4. Exposure to mass media

Table 4.4.1 portrays that young women are poorly exposed to print media since only 3 per cent women read a newspaper or magazine almost every day and 18 per cent of them read it rarely. Nearly 70 per cent of the women reported that they do not read it and listen to radio at all. Majority of the women (72 per cent) watch television regularly, which seems to be a promising medium of exposure for them.

Table 4.4.1: Exposure to mass media

Types of mass media	Almost every day	2-3 times a week	Rarely	Not at all	Total
Women					
Reading newspaper or magazine	3.2	10.0	17.9	68.9	100.0
Listening to radio	4.3	12.3	13.0	70.4	100.0
Watching television	71.6	6.5	12.3	9.6	100.0
Husband					
Reading newspaper or magazine	22.6	26.4	20.9	30.1	100.0
Listening to radio	11.4	18.1	10.5	60.0	100.0
Watching television	68.0	9.2	17.1	5.7	100.0

⁷ Migrated for any period of time outside the village for income and have plans to come back home.

Twenty three per cent women reported that their husbands read a newspaper or magazine almost every day. Similarly 68 per cent of the husbands watch television almost every day. Listening to radio does not seem to be popular in the study population. In addition to this, women and their husbands are exposed to movies or cinemas and theatres. Eighty three per cent women watch a movie or cinema at least once in a month. Similarly, 87 per cent women reported that their husbands watched a movie or went to a cinema hall at least once in a month. The Mass Media Exposure Index (see Chapter III) indicates exposure to mass media. (Table 4.4.2)

Table 4.4.2: Mass media exposure index

Level of exposure to mass media	Percentage	Number of women
Media exposure of woman		
High exposure	12.3	40
Medium exposure	62.3	202
Low exposure	25.4	82
Media exposure of husband		
High exposure	31.8	103
Medium exposure	45.7	148
Low exposure	22.5	73
Total	100.0	324

Thus, 12 per cent women and 32 per cent of their husbands have high exposure to different types of mass media. A majority of the women (62 per cent) and their husbands (46 per cent) were found to have medium exposure to mass media. There are still about one fourth young women and their husbands who have low exposure to mass media.

4.5. Demographic characteristics of women

Table 4.5.1 shows selected demographic characteristics which include different components marriage, fertility and experience of infant death among young women.

Age at marriage of women: The mean age at marriage of young women is 17 years. About 64 per cent of them were married before completing the legal age of marriage, while the remaining 36 per cent were married after the age of 18 years.

Age difference between couples: Though there are few women whose husbands are more than 10 years older than them, the mean age difference between husband and wife is six years. Nearly half the women have less than five years of age difference with their husbands and 42 per cent of them have 6 to 10 years of age difference with their husbands.

Duration of marital life: It is found that 25 per cent women involved in the study were within the first year of their marriage, while about 38 per cent of them had spent two to four years and over five years of their marital life. When women were asked whether their consent was taken for marriage, only 8 per cent of them said that it was not taken.

Table 4.5.1: Demographic characteristics of young women

Demographic characteristics	Percentage	Number of women
Age at marriage of women		
Less than 18 years	63.6	206
18 years and above	36.4	118
Mean age at marriage	17 years	--
Age difference between couples		
Less than 5 years	49.1	159
6-10 years	42.0	136
11 years and above	9.0	29
Mean age difference	6 years	--
Duration of marital life		
0-1 year	24.7	80
2-4 years	37.3	121
5 years and above	38.0	123
Pregnancy outcome in last one year		
Live birth	90.4	293
Still birth	2.8	9
Abortion	6.8	29
Number of living children		
0-1 child	48.5	157
2 children	36.4	118
3 or more children	15.1	49
Number of living children-Female		
No female child	36.7	119
At least one female child	63.3	205
Number of living children-Male		
No male child	33.6	109
At least one male child	66.4	215
Children ever born		
No children	4.0	13
One child	38.9	126
Two children	31.2	101
Three and more children	25.9	84
Experience of infant death		
No infant death	81.1	263
One infant death	17.0	55
More than one infant death	1.9	6
Total	100.0	324

Pregnancy outcome in last one year: Among all the women interviewed, 90 per cent had live births, 3 per cent had still births and 7 per cent had abortion within last one year preceding the survey.

Number of living children: At the time of the survey, 49 per cent women had either no children or one child, 36 per cent had two children and 15 per cent had three or more children. The number of living children by sex reveals that 63 per cent women had at least one female child and 66 per cent women had at least one male child.

Children ever born: There are about 4 per cent women who have never experienced child birth. Thirty nine per cent of them have experienced one child birth, 31 per cent two child births and 26 per cent experienced 3 and more child births in their life time till the time of survey.

Experience of infant death: Though most young women (81 per cent) have not faced infant death, 17 per cent have experienced one infant death and 2 per cent more than one infant death since they are married.

4.6. Profile of the participants of focus group discussions

Young married women chosen for the focus group discussions (FGDs) represent different backgrounds like age, education, occupation, caste and number of children. There were about 64 women who participated in nine FGDs. Of them, 28 women were aged between 15 and 19 years and the remaining 36 in the age group of 20 to 24 years. Similarly, their education ranged from no education to graduation. Sixteen out of 64 FGD participants had no education, while 12 women studied in-between Classes I to V, 25 studied between Classes VI to VIII, and 11 completed Classes IX and above. Most of the young women (42) participated in FGDs were home makers. Only 14 women participants were daily wage labourers and eight did business or self-employed. All the nine FGDs have women representation from all caste categories. Of them, 24 belonged to SCs, 10 to STs, 17 to OBCs and 13 to general castes. Twenty-eight women reported that they had one child, 21 women two children, 10 women three or more children and 5 women had no child at all. (Appendix I)

4.7. Summary

Our study reveals that 70 per cent of the married women were between the ages of 20 to 24 years. About 35 per cent of them and 30 per cent of their husbands had no education, while only 24 per cent women and 45 per cent husbands studied up to Class IX and above. More than three-fourths of the women were home makers while almost the same proportion of

husbands was either working as daily wage labourers or self-employed. It is found that 12 per cent women and 32 per cent of their husbands have high exposure to different types of mass media. A majority of the women (62 per cent) and their husbands (46 per cent) were found to have medium exposure to mass media. There are still about one fourth young women and their husbands who have low exposure to mass media. Television is found as a major type of media for women and their husbands.

More than half (57 per cent) of the study population resided in *pucca* houses, while only 28 per cent in *kachha* houses. The study area was highly inhabited by SCs and OBCs. About 40 per cent women belong to SCs and 30 per cent OBCs, while 15 per cent each to STs and general castes. Similarly, Hindu and Christian are two major dominant religions which shared about 53 per cent and 45 per cent of the population respectively; very few (2 per cent) women were Muslims. The major source of drinking water for the people was open well, followed by bore or tube well. About 75 per cent women reported that toilet facility was not available at home and they used open spaces of the village for this. However, a majority of the households had electricity supply. Overall, very few women (8 per cent) belonged to a high standard of living category, while more than 60 per cent of them were in the medium standard of living category. There are about 31 per cent women who had a low standard of living.

About 64 per cent young women were married before completing the legal age of marriage, the mean age at marriage being 17 years. Though there were some women whose husbands were more than 10 years older than them, the mean age difference between husband and wife was 6 years. It was found that 25 per cent women interviewed were within one year of their marriage, while about 38 per cent had spent two to four years and even above five years of their marital life. When women were asked if their consent was taken for the marriage, 8 per cent of them said that it was not done. Among all the women, 90 per cent had live birth, 3 per cent still birth and 7 per cent abortion within one year preceding the survey. At the time of the survey, 48 per cent women had no or one child, 36 per cent had two children and 15 per cent had three or more children. About 19 per cent women experienced at least one infant death since their marriage.