Education and mass-media exposure vis-à-vis small family norms among scheduled castes of Haryana

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Abstract - India is one of the developing countries who identified family planning as basic to development and it was felt that reduction in population pressure could only be achieved through adoption of small family norms. The success of family planning depends upon different socio-economic factors. Education and mass-media exposure play an important role in changing the mindset of people on any aspect. Hence, the present investigation was undertaken to study the impact of education and media exposure on adoption of small family norms in the scheduled castes families. It was found that all respondents had heard about small family norms and they wanted to adopt SFN for the reason of having only two children. Education and exposure to mass media significantly enhanced the knowledge level of respondents about small family norms. More than 40% of the respondents who were using radio and T.V. or both were having moderately high knowledge about small family norms. About two third of the respondents' wives without education were having neutral attitude but cent per cent of the respondents' wives having matric level education were having favorable attitude towards SFN. Similarly more exposure to mass-media developed favorable attitude toward small family norms. It was concluded that education and mass media exposure favorably contribute to the knowledge and formation of one's attitude towards small family norm.

I. INTRODUCTION

Family size is a matter of great importance not only for the country as a whole but also for the welfare and health of the individual, the family and the community. Our country has adopted the goal of universalizing two-child family norm. The achievement of this goal will have consequences both at the micro level i.e. level of individuals and family as well as at the macro level i.e. for the nation as a whole. India has made significant progress in various developmental sectors since independence but the fruits of these developments have not reached to major segments of the poor. One important reason for this is that many of these gains have been neutralized by the rapid growth of the population. The country does not have the resources to bring about a radical qualitative improvement in the lives of hundreds of millions and at the same time to provide to millions more.

India is one of the developing countries who identified family planning as basic to development. Family planning is an integral part of the package of health, nutrition and health education. In the recent past, country has noticed a rapid fertility decline at the aggregate level (National family health survey-2, 1998-99). The place of this decline, however, is not uniform and varies widely across states due to the cultural and economic heterogeneity and also due to variation in programmatic efforts (Srinivasan and Saxena 1991). This might be due to the north-south divide in the demographic pattern. While in the southern and western parts of the country fertility has declined significantly, the north Indian states still continuing with very slow pace of decline in fertility (Ram, 1997). We all know that there have not been many changes in social parameters that can influence population and people, except small family norms. In such a situation, India's family planning is the only factor that can have effect on fertility. It is being viewed and implemented as a people's programme involving the active cooperation of many sectors and participation of the community at large.

The aim of family planning programme in early stage was to reduce births by fixing contraceptive targets only. But now it has been changed to bring down fertility through improving maternal and child heath care. The "target oriented approach" has been shifted to "community needs assessment approach" in which needs of the community have to be assessed based on the requirements of the people in the implementation of family welfare and maternity and child health programmes. The extreme cases are where girls are even viewed to perform the traditional sons' roles both in economic and sociological terms. The psychological disvalues emerged important affecting factors.

India lunched the National Family Welfare Programme in 1951 with the objective of reducing the birth rate to the

extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent with the requirement of the national economy. "The family welfare programme in India is recognized as a priority area, and is being implemented as a 100% centrally sponsored programme. It was felt that reduction in population pressure could only be achieved through adoption of small family norms. It can be achieved through the process of enhancing knowledge, persuasion, facilitation and people participation, so that they perceive a small family to be primarily in their personal and family interest. Various factors affect family planning and different techniques (Kumar et. al., 2011). Education and mass-media exposure play an important role in changing the mindset of people on any aspect. Hence, the present investigation was undertaken to study the impact of education and media exposure on adoption of small family norms in the scheduled castes families.

II. METHODOLOGY

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 schedule castes families towards small family norms. A pre tested interview schedule was used to collect information of respondents on various aspects of family planning. The information gathered from respondents was also enriched with observations and verification by cross questioning. The data so collected were computed and the inferences were drawn with the help of chi square test of significance. The effect of education and mass-media exposure of respondents on family size was also studied.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Education and mass media exposure of the respondents

Parents' education is much more important in socialization process as they are the first trainer of their children. The data revealed that more than two-third respondents were illiterate followed by up to primary (14%) and up to middle (11%) level of education. Thus, there were 33 per cent literate among the selected respondents. An overwhelming majority of the respondents' wives were illiterate (94.0%) followed by few having up to primary level of education (3.0%) and only one per cent were educated up to matric level.

One-fifth respondents were listening to radio daily and getting messages about small family and other contraceptives. Only 8.5% respondents were viewing television. Although they were viewing small family messages but they were more interested in viewing popular serials and films. Sixteen per cent respondents were having both radio and television, but they were found viewing T.V. more as compared to listening radio. They listen to radio only when there was electric failure or some mechanical default with television. Through T.V. they were becoming aware of small family – the happy family and how to have a small family.

B. Knowledge about small family norms

Knowledge level certainly affects the attitude, behaviour and performance of an individual. 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 child births, family planning techniques, is it available or not, who will be benefited by family welfare programme. Their total knowledge score was obtained and it was divided into four categories viz; low, moderately low, moderately high and high.

It was found that all respondents had heard about small family norms. About one-third of the respondents gave three reasons of SFN namely to have gap between children, to have only two 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. Helen *et. al.* (1996) observed that most of the respondents had got more than four to five children but their preference was for two to three children, one son and one daughter in case of two and two sons and one daughter in case of three or what so ever may be. But they did not know what to do? 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 beneficiaries 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. Half of the respondents knew about five family planning techniques (tubectomy, condom, oral pills, vasectomy and abortion) followed by those knowing six (34.0%) and seven (12.0%) techniques. Only 3.0% respondents knew about foam tablet. Fifty two per cent of the respondents had already adopted permanent method of family i.e. tubectomy (50%) or vasectomy (2%). Regarding temporary methods, 10.5% were adopting temporary methods of family planning namely oral pills (3.5%), condom (6.0%) and copper-T (1.0%). It was clear that there was less use of temporary methods of family

planning as compared to permanent ones. The married women in rural got some vague knowledge about abortion and it was culturally unaccepted concept. When women once got pregnant, they continued with it regardless of the fact whether they liked it or not.

3.1 Association of education and mass-media exposure with knowledge level towards small family norms

The differential level of education among the respondents might exhibit variation in their knowledge level towards family planning and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Relationship of education and mass-media exposure with knowledge level towards small family norm

Factors	**Knowledge levels**				
	Low	**Moderately Low**	**Moderately High**	**High**	**Total**
Respondents' education					
Illiterate	32(23.9)	51(38.3)	49(36.3)	2(1.5)	134(67.0)
Primary	2(7.1)	12(42.9)	10(35.7)	4(14.3)	28(14.0)
Middle	1(4.5)	6(27.3)	10(45.4)	5(22.8)	22(11.0)
Matric	0(0.0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(5.0)
Above matric	0(0.0)	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	3(50.0)	6(3.0)
Respondents' wives' education					
Illiterate	35(18.6)	70(37.2)	72(38.3)	11(5.9)	188(94.0)
Primary	0(0.0)	1(16.7)	3(50.0)	2(33.3)	6(3.0)
Middle	0(0.0)	1(25.0)	1(25.0)	2(50.0)	4(2.0)
Matric	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(50.0)	1(50.0)	2(1-0)
					χ^2 =51.13*
Mass-media exposure					
Nil	28(25.2)	43(38.8)	40(36.0)	0(0.0)	111(55.5)
Radio	7(17.5)	13(32.5)	16(40.0)	4(10.0)	40(20.0)
T.V.	0(0.0)	6(35.3)	7(41.2)	4(23.5)	17(8.5)
Radio & T.V.	0(0.0)	10(31.3)	14(43.7)	8(25.0)	32(16.0)
					χ^2 =91.78*

It was revealed that 38.0% of the respondents belonging to illiterate group were having low level of knowledge regarding small family norms, 42.9% of primary group were having moderately low level of knowledge while half of the respondents belonging to matric and above matric groups were having moderately high and high level of knowledge, respectively. The results clearly indicated that education significantly enhanced the knowledge level of respondents about small family norms.

Similar favorable association between wife's education and knowledge level was found as half of the respondents

of middle and matric educational category were having high level of knowledge regarding small family norms. The results were in agreement to those of Arora (1990) and Reddy *et. al.* (1991).
Mass-media exposure has revolutionized our life and recently there is an explosion in mass-media. A large number of Channels have also been introduced and a large number of production houses have come in existence. There is flood of serials, documentaries and even regarding various contraceptives and small family norms. The knowledge level of respondents across levels of media exposure revealed that about 39% respondents of without mass-media exposure category were having moderately low level of knowledge regarding small family norms (Table 1). More than 40% of the respondents who were using radio and T.V. or both were having moderately high knowledge about small family norms. Chi square results indicated a significant and favorable impact of mass media exposure on knowledge level about small family norm as also reported earlier by Ahmed *et. al* (1988). Nanavati *et. al*. (2006) also reported that mass media especially T.V. was the most effective source of information about contraceptives among adolescent girls.

C. Attitude towards small family norms

The actions of an individual are governed to a great extent by his attitudes. One cannot see attitudes directly but are inferred indirectly through the actions and words of a person. Attitudes have a powerful influence on one's behaviour. With an aim to measure the attitude of respondents towards family planning, a scale was used. As the success of notion of small family norm ultimately depends upon 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 selection of people, which have not yet realized the implications of such programmes is made the focus of attention.
The majority of respondents were in favour of small family norms. The most widely accepted reasons in favour of small family were health of mother (100%), health and happiness of the children (95%), better life of children (87.5%), economic reason (85%), refusal to look after the parents (52.5%) and socio-economic status in the society (49%). Another important aspect was about what should be optimum size of the family. Two third of the respondents described five members as optimum in their family followed by 23.5% respondents each to have four and six members in their family. Only 13.5% wanted to have seven members in their family. One of the most widely accepted reasons of having more children had been the financial, physical and emotional security in old age. In Indian culture a joint family system is dominated where old age security was in built. Forces of social change have eroded our traditional values. Respondents were asked about a desirable stage for a couple to think about to plan their family. More than half of the respondents gave first rank order to more male children than female children in the family, 55% gave second rank order to adopt family planning only when there is a male child in the family while 47.5 % and 37.5 % of the respondents gave third and fourth rank to family planning after two children, respectively. About 40%repondents gave fifth rank order after one child and seventh rank order by 52.5% after three children. It was concluded that majority of the respondents wanted to adopt family planning methods only when there were more males than females in the family or only when there was male member in their family. Helen *et. al.* (1996) reported that there was a strong favorable attitude towards spacing amongst rural women. They strongly asserted that spacing should be 3 or more then 3 years, but they did not know how to do? However, Desgrees and Brou (2005) reported that post partum sexual absentenence formed the backbone of child spacing in developing countries.

3.2 Association of education and mass media exposure with attitude towards small family norms.

Of all the factors involved in attitude formation education has a very strong influence on the individual with a wider and systematic look towards every phenomenon. It was felt that differential levels of education among the respondents and their wives would exhibit, variation in their attitude towards small family norms. The results presented in table 2 indicated that about two-third of the respondents from illiterate and up to middle category were having neutral attitude towards small family norms, where as almost similar proportion (66.7%) of the respondents of above matric category were having favourable attitude towards small family norms.
Similar trend was observed in case of respondents' wives' education where 63.3% of the respondents' wives' without education were having neutral attitude but cent per cent of the respondents' wives of matric category were having favourable attitude. The similar findings were also observed by Tiwari *et al.* (1972), Goyal (1990) and Youssef (2005). It was observed that wife's education had more effect on one's attitudinal behaviour than the husbands. Although husband with more education also helped in promoting the wife attitude towards family welfare.

Table 2 Relationship of education and mass-media exposure with attitude towards level towards small family norm

Factors	Knowledge levels			
	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable	Total
Respondents' education				
Nil	25(18.6)	88(65.7)	21(15.7)	134(67.0)
Primary	17(25.0)	17(60.7)	4(14.3)	28(14.0)
Middle	7(31.8)	13(59.0)	2(9.2)	22(11.0)
Matric	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	0(0.0)	10(5.0)
Above matric	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	6(3.0)
				χ^2 =15.93
Respondents' wives' education				
Nil	42(22.3)	119(63.3)	27(14.4)	188(94.0)
Primary	2(33.3)	4(66.7)	0(0.0)	6(3.0)
Middle	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	0(0.0)	4(2.0)
Matric	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(1.0)
				χ^2 =13.04
Mass-media exposure				
Nil	15(13.5)	75(67.6)	21(18.9)	111(55.5)
Radio	8(20.0)	27(67.5)	5(12.5)	40(20.0)
T.V.	6(35.3)	10(58.8)	1(5.9)	17(8.5)
Radio & T.V.	19(59.7)	13(40.6)	0(0.0)	32(16.0)
				χ^2 =51.78**

About two-third of the respondents of without mass-media exposure and radio were having neutral attitude towards small family norms. Where as in case of both (Radio and T.V.), about 60% of the respondents were having favorable attitude. Chi-square value indicated highly significant favorable association of mass-media exposure with attitude towards small family norms, which inferred that more exposure to mass-media developed favorable attitude toward small family norms. The studies conducted by Kaur and Singh (1982) and Ebigbola (1988) were also in agreement to present study. Thus, it transpires that the newspaper one reads, the mass-media and other services one comes in contact with, all contribute to the formation/reformation of ones attitude towards small family norm.

IV. Association of Education and Mass-Media Exposure 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. Various factors have contributed

toward small family norms. Now the question arises as to how and by what extent these factors like education and mass media exposure affect family size.

The education of families not only provides opportunity for personal advancement and awareness of social mobility but also a new outlook towards family planning. Further, education may not only promote communication between husband and wife but also a better understanding of the reproductive process and access to modern and effective contraceptive methods. These factors may reduce family size by way of first creating awareness of the benefit of having small family size, which in turn may lead to move acceptance of birth control measures. The association of education and family presented in the Table 3 revealed that more than three-fifth of the respondents in educational category of illiterate were having family size of 5-8 members. More than half of the respondents who educated up to middle and matric level were also having family size of 5-8 members. While in case of respondents educated above matric level, 50% were having small family and rest were having medium size of family (5-8) members.

The aggregate analysis has thus shown that as the educational level increases respondent are more likely to favour small family norms. In all situations, increased schooling resulted in modernization and more liberal views thereby affecting family size patterns. Gulati (1987) also reported that educated respondents with higher paramount income were less liable to desire additional children.

Table 3 Association of education and mass-media exposure with family size

Variables	Family size			
	0-4	5-8	Above 8	Total
Respondents' education				
Illiterate	33(24.6)	82(61.2)	19(14.2)	134(67.0)
Primary	8(28.6)	16(57.2)	4(14.2)	28(14.0)
Middle	9(40.9)	12(54.5)	1(4.6)	22(11.0)
Matric	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	0(0.0)	10(5.0)
Above matric	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	6(3.0)
				χ^2 =27.54
Respondents' wives' education				
Illiterate	50(27.1)	115(66.6)	23(12.3)	188(94.0)
Primary	3(50.0)	2(33.3)	1(16.7)	6(3.0)
Middle	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	0(0.0)	4(2.0)
Matric	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(1.0)
				χ^2 =20.73
Mass-media exposure				
Nil	28(25.2)	68(61.3)	15(13.5)	111(55.5)
Radio	11(27.5)	25(60.5)	4(12.0)	40(20.0)

T.V.	6(35.5)	9(52.9)	2(11.6)	17(8.5)
Both	12(40.6)	17(50.0)	3(9.4)	32(16.0)

χ^2 =93.49*

The above findings were in agreement with Arora (1990) who reported that through the educational level of wife was quite important in explaining the differential fertility yet the educational level of husband was also important. She observed that wives in general got an upliftment, a short of mobility in marriage as they were usually married to more educated husbands. This was so because the husband by virtue of his education and awareness of social problems would be able to convince his less educated wife the utility of having lesser number of children.

Education of wife had favourable impact on family size as it was found that more than two-third respondents from illiterate category had 5-8 members while 50% from middle class category and cent per cent from matric category had small families upto 4 members. Rob (1990) also reported that educated women had small families. It was, thus, seen that as we move from lower level of education to higher level the desire for actual number of children and more number of sons decreases. It suggested that the educated people in general are likely to have a greater inclination towards small family norms than the uneducated respondents.

The results regarding mass-media exposure and family size (table 3) indicated that more than 60 per cent of the respondents of without mass media exposure group were having 5-8 members and 25.2% were having small families. Sixty per cent of the respondents of radio mass-media group were having 5-8 members. About 36% respondents of TV mass-media group and 40% respondents of both radio and TV group were having small family size. Chi-square results were also significant showing the favorable association of mass-media exposure with family size. Ebigbola (1988) also pointed out that the news media had a great role to play in discriminating information. The radio, the press, the television bill board, printed materials and personal communication are persuasive mass media which are commonly used for various instructional purposes in tribal languages by the various arms of government to disseminate information on contraceptive.

It was observed that education together with the wide circulation of newspapers and other mass-media have enabled women to abandon their traditional belief and practices regarding child birth and pregnancy. Further, these factors have favorably enhanced the knowledge and attitude of people toward small family norms.

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