

Son preference and contraceptive practice among tribal groups in rural South India

Sathiya Susuman Appunni

Abstract

This paper examines the son preference and contraceptive practice among tribal groups in rural south India. Parents' preferences for the sex of their children have constituted an important theme in population and social research over the past three decades. Data were collected from a household survey of 398 currently married women of reproductive age group (15-49) from four taluks in the Nilgiris District of rural Tamilnadu are selected with respect to the different tribal communities. Cross tabulation and logistic regression analysis was carried out for finding out relationships between the socio-economic, demographic variables on contraceptive practice. The use of contraceptive practice by tribal groups in rural areas is strongly linked to individual and household socio-economic and demographic variables. Findings shows that the expectation that a son will provide financial support in old age is strongly associated with the response that a son is important. Son preference is slightly more among the tribal women, particularly among the users of spacing method who are more among those preferring the sons. Some of the socio-economic variables like education of husband and occupation have shown negative influence on higher fertility and positive influence on contraceptive use among the tribal women. It is proposed that there is need for more comprehensive on tribes in different areas in state and in the Indian nation to explicitly bring out the son preference attitudes of tribal people, which have an impact on their fertility and family planning practices.

Introduction

The present study is an attempt to find out the reproductive behavior in relationship to their son preference and an answer to the general query – how the tribal communities differ from the general population with regard to this and their various socio-economic and demographic characteristics while inhabiting in the same ecosystem. Son preference is one of the reasons given for high fertility and low acceptance of family planning in many developing nations. Such a preference is believed to have a strong effect on the number of additional children parents have near and above the desired minimum size. Adoption or non-adoption of family planning method eventually depends on their achieved sex preference of children (Krishnamoorthy, 1974; Coombs et al., 1975; Krishnan, 1993; Rajaretnam and Deshpande, 1994, 1995; Rajan et al., 1996; Muthurayappa et al., 1997; Arnold et al., 1998; Sathiya Susuman, 2000). At the same

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