

ABSTRACTS

The Global Fertility Transition and Nepal

JOHN C. CALDWELL

The global fertility transition has now been progressing for two centuries and still not all countries have begun their fertility declines. The first to do so was France in the late eighteenth century. The most recent is Nepal which is now the poorest country in the world with declining fertility, although at the onset of its decline it probably compared in per capita income with Bangladesh and possibly with France at their onsets. New data sources now allow us to compare fertility transitions across the world in terms of the speed of declines in individual countries and in the diffusion of their onsets from one country to another across regions. The similarities, at least over the last 125 years, are more striking than the differences. The Nepal decline is a typical Asian one with leadership provided by the government and elites, and resembles India in the predominant role played by sterilization. Nepal's fertility transition is of particular interest in three ways: (1) the low per capita income at which it is occurring; (2) the difficult topography of the country, which divides the population into those with easy access to the outside world who have joined the global economy and exhibit declining fertility and those without roads or schools who are still characterized by stable high fertility; and (3) the reliance for most fertility control on sterilization.

Fertility Trends in Nepal, 1977-1995

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SHYAM THAPA

This article presents estimates of fertility trends in Nepal for the period 1977-95, derived from two national surveys—the 1991 Nepal Fertility, Family Planning and Health Survey (NFFPHS) and the 1996 Nepal Family Health Survey (NFHS). Various fertility measures are estimated, including age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs), the total fertility rate (TFR), period parity progression ratios (PPPRs), and the total fertility rate and the total marital

fertility rate derived from PPPRs (TFR_p and $TMFR_p$). Trends in these measures are estimated for the 15-year period before each survey in the case of ASFRs and the TFR, and for the 10-year period before each survey in the case of PPPRs, TFR_p , and $TMFR_p$. For any given fertility measure, each survey yields a trend for years before the survey, and the two trends estimated from the two surveys overlap during some of these years. If the data were perfect, the two trends would coincide during the period of overlap. But the data are not perfect, and the trends do not coincide. Analysis of the discrepancies allows an improved assessment of the true trend in fertility. The principal finding is that fertility has been declining somewhat more slowly than commonly thought. The total fertility rate is estimated to have declined from 5.80 to 4.95 between 1977 and 1995. It declined more rapidly in urban areas than in rural areas, and more rapidly among women with more than a primary education than among women with a primary education or less.

Tamang Transitions: Transformations in the Culture of Childbearing and Fertility among Nepal's Tamang

DILLI R. DAHAL

THOMAS E. FRICKE

This article reviews significant findings from over 15 years of research on the culture of fertility and family transitions in two Tamang communities of Nepal. Data sources include both qualitative ethnography and quantitative survey materials collected from the collaborative Tamang Family Research Project. Major findings indicate that behavioral transitions in familial and childbearing patterns are closely associated with changing economic contexts away from earlier subsistence production to increasing involvement in the monetized economy. More recently, research has further indicated the beginnings of transitions in the cultural contexts of family and identity. The authors suggest that the moral entailments of Tamang patterns of meaning are the key to variations in behavior in response to changing material conditions.

Fertility Transition in Kathmandu

RAM HARI ARYAL

Using data from a survey carried out in Kathmandu in 1997, this paper analyzes the onset of the fertility transition. The analysis uses the index of marital fertility control (m) and parity progression ratios to document the onset of fertility changes. The results show that women tend to have children shortly after marriage. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a transition toward two and three child families. Additionally as educational attainment rises, women's fertility declines.

Determinants of Fertility in the 1970s and 1990s in Nepal

LAXMI BILAS ACHARYA

Using data from the 1976 Nepal Fertility Survey and the 1996 Nepal Family Health Survey this paper examines how selected socioeconomic variables and two proximate factors, age at marriage and ever use of contraception, affect both recent and cumulative fertility. The total change in fertility is decomposed to assess the extent to which changes in fertility behavior were due to compositional changes in the distribution of women or were net of these effects. The results show that socioeconomic variables have begun to play an important role in fertility reduction. Age at marriage has a strong inverse association with cumulative fertility; contraception, however, has a positive association. This could be due to the tendency for Nepali couples to use contraception only after achieving their desired family size.

Moslem and Non-Moslem Fertility Differences in the Eastern Terai of Nepal

SHARA G. NEIDELL

BHANU B. NIRLA

S. PHILIP MORGAN

SHARON STASH

Using data collected in early 1997 from three religious/ethnic groups (Moslems, Mahato and Tharu) in the Eastern Terai of Nepal we examine the effects of religious/ethnic differences, other background variables and measures of women's autonomy on reproductive behavior. Moslem women have lower levels of autonomy, greater desires for additional children and are less likely to be using

contraception than either Mahato or Tharu women. Multivariate analyses reveal the persistence of these religious/ethnic variations, thereby suggesting that women's autonomy differences cannot explain differences in reproductive behavior. We discuss other explanations for these fertility differences.

Socioeconomic Changes, Women's Autonomy, and Timing of First Birth in a Semi-Urban Community in Nepal

DEVENDRA P. SHRESTHA

Using micro-demographic data gathered from a single ethnic group, the Newars of Kirtipur in the Kathmandu Valley, this paper examines the influence of family and individual experience variables on the timing of the first birth in the context of social transformation. The cohort analysis finds that the first birth interval has been declining in the study community. The results show significant effects of birth cohort, respondent's outside exposure before marriage and the interaction term, gift times time. The effects of several other variables, while not significant, are in the expected directions, suggesting that women's literacy, higher age at marriage and having one's own choice of spouse may encourage the establishment of intimacy between a husband and wife and, therefore, lead to a shortening of the first birth interval.

Regional Patterns of Fertility in Nepal

BHIM P. SUBEDI

Using ecodevelopment regions as the units of analysis and data from the 1971 and 1991 population censuses, this paper examines regional-level changes in fertility and its association with selected development factors. The results suggest a mixed pattern of fertility changes in the 15 ecodevelopment regions during the 20-year period. Fertility has clearly declined in two of the 15 regions, which are characterized by high levels of social and human development. In some districts there is a plateau in the level of fertility, while in other areas, fertility may even be rising. Some of the apparent differences and changes may be related to the quality of the data as well as changes in mortality. These preliminary results suggest further research is needed to understand fertility differentials at the regional level in Nepal.

Women's Autonomy and Reproductive Behavior in Two Urban Areas of Nepal

BHANU B. NIRLA
DOVAN LAWATI

Based on data collected in 1997, this paper examines the interrelationship between gender roles, women's autonomy and fertility behavior in two urban settings, one in the hill and the other in Terai. The results confirm gender-specific division of work. The Terai setting, however, shows comparatively more gender-balance in tasks performed and decisions made than the hill setting. Following from this, women's autonomy in the Terai was found to be higher than in the hill. This is not, however, associated with differential patterns of reproductive behavior. The hill women, in spite of their lower autonomy, are less likely to have an unmet need for contraception than those in the Terai. We surmise that there may be some threshold level of modernization above which further improvements in women's autonomy may not lead to continued increases in contraceptive use.

The Contextual Web of Fertility Control: A Case Study of Chisang Village

DEBENDRA KARKI

The paper examines how various village and family/individual level factors have triggered measurable changes in reproductive attitudes and behavior in Chisang, a village in the Eastern Terai of Nepal. The research design employed a combination of survey questionnaires and unstructured interviews, complemented by participant observation. In Chisang, fertility change is occurring as a result of changing sociocultural, economic and development factors including increased educational opportunities, changing roles of women and local availability of family planning methods in addition to infrastructure development. This case study underscores that analysis of fertility changes in the village should not be viewed in isolation from the regional or national socioeconomic changes which form the context of the fertility transition. The majority of the Chisang residents are migrants, and are therefore receptive to changing norms and practices. They are innovative and are breaking away from many traditional ways of thinking; one of these innovations is increased fertility regulation achieved principally by delaying age of marriage and increasing contraceptive use within marriage.

Understanding Fertility Transition: Back to Basics

JOHN CLELAND

A review of developing country demographic trends since 1960 demonstrates that fertility decline has occurred in a wide range of economic, social and cultural circumstances and that it will probably become universal in the near future. It is argued that the huge gains in life expectancy that occurred in the twentieth century constitute the most plausible underlying cause of the near-ubiquitous falls in fertility. However, explanations of the precise timing and speed of national fertility transitions need to take into account many other factors.