

Male Fertility and Male Sexuality: The Role of Social and Cultural Factors

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ABSTRACT Male fertility is the correct word for fertility of a couple as men's decisions often prevail over women, particularly in developing countries. The indulgence of men in sexual activities both within and outside marriage determines the actual fertility performance of men. Men belonging to backward classes are continuously under stress particularly in matters of sexuality and fertility due to social and cultural problems. Therefore a study of the relation between male fertility and sexuality of certain minority populations such as Scheduled caste and tribe and the Muslim populations has been chosen. Fertility in these communities in general is influenced by socio-cultural factors. However, social and cultural factors have roots in economic factors. Owing to poverty and lack of education the decisions of men on fertility are affected. A sample of 1046 men belonging to Scheduled caste and tribe and the Muslims has been chosen from the backward regions of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, India based on literacy criteria. Several reproductive health problems and sexual behaviour of men have been investigated. Total fertility, which includes actual and desired fertility, and reaction to more number of children, have been taken as dependant variables. Multiple classification analysis (MCA) has been done with total fertility as dependant variable. Social cultural and reproductive health problems have been considered as independent variables. Analysis of variance of two-way interactions obtained initially in MCA has revealed that caste and religion and educational status (F value significant at: .000 level); present symptoms related to sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and reaction to more number of children (F value significant at: .056); and reaction to more number of children and wife-beating reported by husband (F value significant at: .099) as most important variables affecting total fertility. Bivariate logistic regression with reaction to more number of children has shown that Muslims and the men who indulged in wife beating during the last 12 months before the survey were not embarrassed to have more number of children. On the other hand, men with more levels of education, and with STD symptoms at the time of survey have been found to be embarrassed to have more children.