WOMEN'S FERTILITY PREFERENCES IN SRI LANKA

M.D.J.W Wijesinghe

Department of Economics and Statistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages
Sabaragamuwa University, Belihuloya

Keywords: *Women, Fertility Preferences*

Introduction

Caldwell and Caldwell (1987) point out traditional societies considered women as a person who bears the burden of pregnancy and child birth. Further the number of children that she bears is reflected the desired fertility of her husband and his relatives. However in the modern societies it is varying gradually due to change of socio demographic and economic factors. Hakim.C (2003) argues that fertility preferences of women have changed in modern societies due to two main factors; fertility and employment. Further fertility preferences theory concludes women's life style and economic preferences as principal determinants of their fertility choices. Previous studies found that a strong relationship between women's education levels and fertility, the desired family size, contraceptive usage and age at marriage (Martin, 1995; Angeles, Giulkey and Mroz,2003). R Weston et al (2004) argued that it is important to identify the fertility preferences of both women and men according to socio demographic factors such as ethnicity, educational levels, age, gender and occupational status and socio economic factors. However the usefulness and importance of the measuring fertility preferences become a one of more controversial areas in the demographic. Demeny (1988), Blake (1974) and Hauser (1967) reject the usefulness of the study of fertility preferences because they argues those answers are personalized to condition at the time of the interview and it do not hold in the long run. On the other hand Westoff (1990), Freedman et al (1975) are the social scientists who accept the validity of studying fertility preferences as a source of actual fertility outcomes. Some scientists such as Bulatao (1981), Pullum (1980),Namboodiri (1972) and Lee(1980) show balance view and they also believed fertility intention is a some of determining actual behavior. However fertility and fertility preferences are more important indicators for the socio economic development in the societies. Therefore most of researches have taken some attempts to identify fertility preferences in both development and developing countries.

Considering the Sri Lankan context, socio demographic and economic status of people have changed significantly in last decades with the development of education and health sector especially women's status. However there were some studies related to fertility preferences of women in Sri Lanka(De silva indralal,1985;Pullum, T. W. ,1980). However there are hardly any studies regarding fertility preferences of women in recent. Fertility preferences are known as a reflection of subsequent fertility behavior. Therefore understanding fertility preferences and their determinants help in planning strategies in the country.

The prime objective is to examine the effect of socio demographic and economic factors on future fertility preferences of women. Based on fertility preference theories and previous studies, the conceptual framework of this frame works as follows; ideal family sizes, desire for future child are used as fertility preferences indicators. These three indicators could be affected by three influencing factors which are socio-demographic, socio-economic and personal or family factors. Under the socio-demographic factors, the study considers wife's and husband's age, religion, wife's and husband's education. Wealth index, wife's and

husband's occupation, earning differences and place of residence sector (urban, rural and estate) and district are considered. In the personal or family factors; age at first marriage, number of living children, exposure to mass media, and spousal communication in family planning and spousal communication in desire number of children are considered.

Methodology

This study used secondary data of Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS) conducted in 2006/2007 by department of Census and Statistics for analyzing. The data was collected through the personal interviews by using questionnaires.

The sample size was 14909. All ever married women aged 15-49 years were interviewed to identify the fertility behavior among them. The data base was merged according to the key for individual persons. Then the new data file of 15407 women was createdQWSEC07:Fertility   Preferences,QWSEC008:Woman's   work   and husband'sbackground
characteristics,QWSEC01:Respondent'sbackground,QWSEC2A:Reproduction,QWSEC2D: reproduction (Continued),QWSEC3B Contraceptiondata files were merged to QSECOVER: individual identification data file.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies and cross tabulations and methods of data presentation like graphs and diagrams were used for the preliminary analysis. Binary logisticwere used for the analyzing.

Discussion and Conclusion

The regression results of the above model are given as follows:

Table 1: Logistic Regression Results for desire for another Child and Number of desire Children

Desire for another child	B	Exp(B)	Desire family Size Small Vs more five members	B2	Exp(B)2
Women 's Work Participation	.244	1.276	husband's preference		
Being a Muslim Women	1.716	5.563	Same Number	2.467	11.784
Inter Spousal Communication	-.322	.724	More Children	2.159	8.664
Age at marriage	.127	1.136	Fewer Children	2.004	7.415
Number of Ever born children	-1.283	.277	Being a Muslim Women	-1.137	.321
District			Age at marriage	.038	1.039
Colombo	-.344	.709	Number of Ever born children	-.486	.615
Matara	.683	1.980	District		
Hambantota	.853	2.346	Gampaha	.949	2.583
Ampara	.541	1.718	Nuwara Eliya	1.891	6.627
Trincomalee	2.016	7.509	Hambantota	-1.039	.354
Anuradhapura	.710	2.034	Batticaloa	2.098	8.147
Moneragala	.646	1.907	Constant	1.967	7.150
Current age of Women	-.197	.821			
Constant	5.250	190.482			

Source: DHS, 2006, 07

According to above model the living district, it is statistically significant according to the Wald test in the districts of Colombo, Matara, Hambantota, Ampara, Trincomalee, Anuradapura and Monaragala relatively to the Kegalle District to determine fertility preferences. Colombo district shows a negative relationship with demanding more children. However other district has a positive relationship. No of ever born children also negatively

affect with wanting more children. When the number of children is increase by one, the demand for another child decrease by 0.277 times. Women's Work participation has positive relationship with demanding another child and the desire for another child is 1.276 odd times higher than the women who are not in Labor market.According to the previous studies, religion play important role to determine the fertility behavior of women. In the Study found that there is a positive relationship with demanding more children and being a Muslim Women. Being Muslim women, the desire for another child is 5.563 odd times higher than the non Muslim women. Number of ever born children and current age of women has negative impact on demanding another child. According to Oyediran and Isiugo –Abanihe (2002) spousal communication about family planning, age of wives, have significant effect on not wanting more children in Nigeria. The study also found similar result. Age at marriage has positive impact by indicating the women Age at marriage increase by one year demand for another child increase by 1.136 odd times. The husband and wife good inter spousal communication about the family planning lower the desire for another child. Even though Husband's occupation and age. Women's education, wealth factor were significantly in individual model, those variables are insignificant in the full model in the study.

Considering number of desired children, there are two dependent variable used as women who want less than five children (Small family) and women who want more than five children. According to binary logistic model, Husband preferences for desire family size positively affect on women's fertility preferences. Being a Muslim Women has negative relationship with demanding small family. Age at marriage, number of ever born children and residential district are also statistically significant in the model. Number of ever born children has negative relationship with number of desire children.residential sector has negative relationship with number of desire children. Being a woman in Gampha, Nuwara Eliya and Batticaloa has positive relationship with demanding small family size. Being a woman in Batticaloa district, number of desire children increased by 8.147 times relative to kegalle district. On the other hand being a woman in a Hambantota district has a negative relationship with number of desire children.

Fertility preference is more important factor in demographic studies and human development. This study used two variables to measure fertility preferences: desire for future child, number of desire children. According to binary logistic regression, residential district, wife's age, number of ever born children, husband's fertility preferences, being a Muslim woman, age at marriage, inters spousal communication are statistically significant for women's fertility preferences.

References

Angeles, G., Guilkey, D.K and Mroz, T.A. (2003) 'The effects of education and family planning programs on fertility in indonesia', working paper for measure evaluation project, Carolina population center, university of North Carolina. Available at Http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnada389.pdf

Blake, J. (1974) "can we believe recent data on birth expectations in the united states?" Demography, vol. 11, pp: 25-54.

Bulatao, R. A. (1981) "Values and disvalues of children in successive childbearing decisions, Demography, vol. 18, pp: 1-26.

Caldwell, J. C. And P. Caldwell. (1987). "The cultural context of high fertility in sub-saharan africa." Population and development review, 18(2): 211-242

Demeny, P. (1988) "Social science and population policy", Population development review, vol. 14, pp: 451-479.

Freedman, R.A I. Hermalin and M. C. Chang (1975) "Do statements about family size predict fertility? The case of Taiwan 1967-70", demography, vol. 12, pp:407-416.

Hakim, C. (2003) 'A new approach to explaining fertility patterns: preference theory', available at http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3115278?uid=3738456&uid=2129&uid=2 & uid=70&uid=4&sid=47698967691297

Hauser, P. M. (1967) "Family planning and population programs", demography,vol. 4, pp: 397-414.

Lee, R. D. (1980) "Aiming at a moving target: period fertility and changing reproductive goals", population studies, vol. 34, pp: 205-226

Namboodiri, N. K. (1972) "Some observations on the economic framework for fertility analysis", population studies, vol. 26, pp: 185-206.

Pullum, T. W. (1980) illustrative analysis: fertility preferences in Sri Lanka. Wfs scientific reports, no. 9.

Supplement: global fertility transition, population council. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/3115251.

Westoff, C. F. (1990) "reproductive intentions and fertility rates", international family planning perspectives, vol. 16.