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Some Results From a Baseline Survey in Uttar Pradesh

Dr. R.B. Gupta and Dr. M.E. Khan

The consistently high rate of adolescent childbearing in India is an issue of concern to policy makers because of the serious negative social, economic and health consequences associated with early pregnancy. Besides, early marriage leads to the beginning of childbearing at an early age, which eventually increases the risk of mortality and morbidity for both mother and child.

In the Indian cultural setting, an increase in the age at marriage to a limited extent has certain repercussions. Thus, raising the age at marriage for girls to 18 years has caused the waiting time between marriage and pregnancy (gauna or effective marriage) to almost disappear, and at the same time, societal pressure combined with scant knowledge of and desire to plan a family have given a boost to teenage fertility. Therefore, an increase in the age at marriage from a very low level to around 16 or 17 years, have, in reality, hardly had any impact on fertility. The negligible contribution to fertility of girls below the age of 15 years is another reason for this lack of impact.

The current level of adolescent fertility (the age specific fertility rate among women aged 15-19 years) in Uttar Pradesh is high (around 90-100 births per 1000 women), with a total fertility rate of about five. Almost half of the teenage girls in the state are married, and most of them have very little information either about the advantages, especially the health benefits, of delayed pregnancies or about the availability of contraceptives.

Another emerging concern related to the increase in age at marriage is the sexual behavior of unmarried young men and women and its implications for unwed motherhood, abortion (mostly illegal abortion), sexually transmitted diseases, and a decline in family values. In this context, it is feared that changes in social values may lead to an increase in premarital sexual activity, pregnancy and possibly childbearing among unmarried girls, apart from increasing the, incidence of abortions. In the Indian situation however, traditional values favoring parental intervention in marriage and values associated with chastity before marriage still prevail to a large extent. Unfortunately very little information is available regarding the attitudes and behavior of both young unmarried and married adolescents in relation to their sexual knowledge and

attitudes, and sexual and reproductive behavior including that relating to pregnancy childbearing.

Demographic surveys have provided some information on these aspects but, by and large, the data relates to married women and, even so, to very small samples. Several advanced countries have been able to reduce teenage fertility to negligible levels for achieving their targeted replacement levels. An understanding of the attitudes of teenagers regarding sex and sexuality as also their sexual behavior would not only help plan educational and counseling strategies for adolescents to reduce adolescent fertility and their reproductive and sexual health related problems but also help formulate appropriate course curricula for inclusion in school.

Surveys [1] have shown that countries where the proportion of teenagers in marital union is high also have high total fertility rates. Besides risks to their own health, studies[2] have also shown that teenage mothers give birth to a high proportion of low birth weight babies and experience greater foetal loss than their older counterparts.

This paper attempts to look at the fertility differentials among adolescents (13-19 years of age) and currently married women in Uttar Pradesh, one of the four large northern states which pose a demographic challenge to India. Here the status of women is low: two-thirds of women age 20-24 years marry before age 18, female literacy is 25 per cent, the total fertility rate is 5.1 (1991) and the birth rate 36.2 (1992) per 1000 population. It also seeks to determine whether regional /district level variations exist in these differentials.

The data for the study was drawn from a baseline survey undertaken in 15 districts of Uttar Pradesh, jointly by the SIFPSA [3] (State Innovations in Family Planning Services Project Agency) and the Population Council during 1993-94. A sample of 2,500 households was drawn from each of the 15 districts of Uttar Pradesh, and all ever married women in the 13-49 age group in these households were interviewed. Thus, a total of 42,377 women from 37,226 households in the 15 districts were covered. Although questions concerning adolescent fertility were few, the study does provide existing levels and regional differentials in adolescent fertility in the state.

Findings and Discussion

In a closed society where children are generally born within wedlock (a negligible number are born outside wedlock), the proportion of those married among adolescents as well as the age at which these girls enter into effective

marital union assume importance. These two factors taken together are responsible for the intrinsic contribution of adolescents to fertility.

Proportion of Married Teenagers

Table 1 presents the proportion of married females among all adolescent females in six districts drawn from among the 15 surveyed districts. The findings show that about 25 per cent of the girls in the sample were married; this proportion varied from 40 per cent in Sitapur to only eight per cent in Tehri Garhwal district.

Table 1: Proportion of ever married female teenagers (13-19 years) to all female teenagers

	Rampur	Sitapur	Kanpur	Gorakhpur	Jhansi	Tehri Garhwal	Total
Place							
Urban	7.9	27.7	10.7	11.8	23.0	6.5	13.7
Rural	26.0	42.6	32.2	26.3	44.4	8.0	31.2
Education							
Illiterate	25.1	51.3	37.1	35.4	56.4	19.9	39.5
Primary	15.7	29.3	11.5	11.7	31.4	5.8	18.1
Primary & above	10.8	23.3	10.1	12.4	22.4	4.0	13.6
Religion							
Hindu	25.9	41.4	14.5	23.8	35.8	8.0	26.2
Muslim	14.9	34.9	11.5	19.0	2.1	-	18.4
Caste							
SC/ST	27.4	47.7	20.2	31.9	46.5	16.6	38.0
Other Backward caste	29.1	42.8	18.5	27.5	38.7	-	29.7
High caste	25.7	27.4	10.5	9.2	19.7	7.0	13.7
Total	**20.5**	**40.4**	**13.8**	**23.2**	**34.8**	**7.9**	**24.8**

Table 1 also shows a significant difference in the proportion of married teenage girls by residence (urban: 14 per cent; rural: 31 per cent); educational level (illiterate: 40 per cent; primary and above: 14 per cent); religion (Hindu: 26 per cent; Muslim: 18 per cent), and caste group (scheduled caste/ tribe: 38 per cent; high caste Hindus: 14 per cent). Although these variations by population

characteristics were observed in all the districts, the degree of variation differed markedly from district to district.

Mean Age at Marriage and Literacy

As mentioned earlier, age at marriage in an important variable which affects the fertility of a given area. Table 2 which presents the mean age at marriage and literacy of the respondents, shows a wide variation in the former ranging from 15.2 years to Jaunpure to 17.9 in Ghaziabad and Meerut. A clear variation is seen between the Western and Hill regions where the age at marriage is high and the Central, Eastern and Bundelkhand regions with a low age at marriage.

Table 2: Mean age at marriage and literacy of ever-married teenage girls

Region/District	Mean age at marriage (yrs)	% married females		Literacy rate
		13-14 years	15-19 years	
Western				
Ghaziabad	17.9	< 1	13	
Meerut	17.9	0	19	
Rampur	17.5	2	28	
Central				
Sitapur	15.4	7	46	
Shahjahanpur	15.2	6	54	
Kanpur Nagar	17.1	< 1	19	
Eastern				
Gonda	15.5	2	19	
Gorakhpur	17.0	< 1	33	
Jaunpur	15.2	6	57	
Hills				
Tehri Garhwal	17.7	< 1	8	
Pithoragarh	16.5	< 1	31	
Nainital	17.5	1	16	
Budelkhand				
Jhansi	16.6	5	46	
Laltipur	15.8	9	67	
Jalaun	15.6	4	57	

On similar lines, a very positive correction between female literacy and the more age at marriage (- 0.76), and a negative correlation between the percentage married and the mean age at marriage (- 0.80) were observed in the districts surveyed suggesting that these three factors namely the proportion of married women, their mean age at marriage, and educational level are highly interlinked and affect each other.

FP awareness, Approval and Adoption

Table 3 presents the awareness of and attitude towards family planning of the married teenage (13-19 years) respondents and all married respondents (13-49 years), as well as its acceptance. As the findings indicate, awareness of family planning was quite high among the teenage wives although, as expected, it was relatively lower than that among the older couples. Regional and district level variations were marginal except in the Hill region where awareness was rather low (around 50 per cent in Pithoragarh and Nainital districts).

Table 3: FP awareness, approval and adoption among teenage and all married females

Region/District	% Aware		% Approve		% Users	
	All	< 20 yrs	All	< 20 yrs	All	< 20 yrs
Western						
Ghaziabad	98	96	92	88	33	4
Meerut	94	87	78	71	34	7
Rampur	87	81	74	74	22	6
Central						
Sitapur	98	93	82	78	15	2
Shahjahanpur	98	95	82	74	12	3
Kanpur Nagar	98	95	94	93	37	11
Eastern						
Gonda	93	92	68	78	12	5
Gorakhpur	98	98	86	84	21	3
Jaunpur	99	99	87	91	20	2
Hills						
Tehri Garhwal	76	78	78	33	3	-

Pithoragarh	79	55	79	62	43	6
Nainital	83	51	80	58	52	8
Bundelkhand						
Jhansi	100	100	92	90	50	16
Laltipur	100	100	90	86	33	12
Jalaun	97	91	90	87	27	9

Table 3 further indicates that a sizeable proportion of teenage couples did adopt family planning, especially in Bundelkhand region and Kanpur Nagar district in Central Uttar Pradesh (around 10 per cent). Elsewhere, it was low - around five percent. It may be noted that while literacy, age at marriage and family planning adoption among older couples (20 years and older) go together, no such relationship was apparent in terms of family planning adoption among the teenage couples (refer Tables 2 and 3). A possible reason for this could be that the understanding of family planning as well as accessibility to counseling and services was probably higher among older couples than among their teenage counterparts.

Contribution of Teenage Fertility to Total Fertility

The contribution of teenage fertility to the total fertility (TFR) was observed to be around 15 per cent for Uttar Pradesh as reported by different sources including the Baseline Survey of Uttar Pradesh (BSUP) from which the data for this study have been drawn. This is substantial and requires attention. In fact, it adds about 0.8 child to a TFR of 5.2 for the state as a whole. Table 4 presents the contribution of teenage fertility to the total fertility of Uttar Pradesh state for the 15 districts studied.

Table 4: Percentage contribution of age specific fertility of ever married teenage females to TFR

Region/District	**TFR**	**ASFR among females aged**		**% contribution to TFR**
		13-14 years	**15-19 years**	
Western				
Ghaziabad	3.1	0.000	0.038	6.1
Meerut	4.5	0.000	0.026	2.9
Rampur	5.2	0.000	0.038	3.7
Central				
Sitapur	5.5	0.010	0.120	11.3

Shahjahanpur	5.6	0.004	0.142	12.9
Kanpur Nagar	3.3	0.000	0.068	6.5
Eastern				
Gonda	5.0	0.008	0.125	13.4
Gorakhpur	4.6	0.000	0.045	4.6
Jaunpur	4.8	0.000	0.078	8.1
Hills				
Tehri Garhwal	2.6	0.000	0.009	1.7
Pithoragarh	3.2	0.003	0.092	14.5
Nainital	3.5	0.000	0.060	8.6
Budelkhand				
Jhansi	3.3	0.000	0.140	21.2
Laltipur	4.7	0.010	0.152	16.1
Jalaun	4.8	0.004	0.206	23.0

The findings show that the share of teenage fertility in the total fertility of Uttar Pradesh varies widely from 1.7 per cent in the Hill district of Tehri Garhwal to as much as 23 per cent in Jalaun in Bundelkhand region. The Bundelkhand and Central Uttar Pradesh regions appear to have contributed substantially to the total fertility of the state. An increase in the age at marriage of girls and the use of contraceptives to postpone pregnancy in the initial stages of married life would certainly have a significant impact on lowering fertility.

Unmet Need for Family Planning

Table 5 presents the unmet need for family planning for ever-married teenagers (13-19 years) and all ever-married women (13-49 years). The findings reveal a high level of unmet need for both spacing and liming children, the need being greater among older couples but also expressed by the married teenage girls. Understandably, among the latter, the unmet need for limiting children was almost non-existent though it was substantially high for spacing children.
Regional variations were again quite large with the Eastern region depicting the highest unmet need for child spacing among the teenage respondents. This again shows that this group of young women are in need of family planning and greater efforts are required from the very start of marital life, even before they enter into marital union, especially in educating and counseling as them also in providing them with suitable spacing methods and follow up services after they are married.

Table 5: Distribution of teenage and married females by unmet need for family planning

Region/District	% having unmet need for			
	Spacing		Limiting	
	All	< 20 yrs	All	< 20 yrs
Western				
Ghaziabad	8.4	1.8	24.1	
Meerut	20.4	11.6	27.5	
Rampur	28.0	17.2	27.1	
Central				
Sitapur	33.5	17.9	23.8	
Shahjahanpur	24.6	8.9	27.8	
Kanpur Nagar	11.9	4.5	24.4	
Eastern				
Gonda	16.3	17.8	31.7	
Gorakhpur	24.8	13.8	31.3	
Jaunpur	32.5	22.7	26.8	
Hills				
Tehri Garhwal	8.4	1.8	28.2	
Pithoragarh	24.5	17.8	22.9	
Nainital	19.4	13.3	18.0	
Budelkhand				
Jhansi	18.3	9.0	11.9	
Laltipur	20.6	9.0	17.6	
Jalaun	20.8	8.7	20.1	

Media Exposure to FP and Husband-Wife Communication

Table 6 gives a distribution of the respondents by age and exposure to family planning. It indicates that teenage married women particularly in the Ghaziabad and Jalaun districts of the Western and Bundelkhand regions respectively have had a high exposure to family planning through the media suggesting that the media can play an important role in passing on the family planning message to young girls/people.

Table 6: Distribution of teenage and married females by exposure to FP through the media and husband-wife communication

Region/District	% respondents reporting			
	FP exposure through mass media		Husband-wife communication on family size soon after marriage	
	All	< 20 yrs	All	< 20 yrs
Western				
Ghaziabad	98	98	22	53
Meerut	42	39	21	52
Rampur	32	34	16	36
Central				
Sitapur	24	20	13	36
Shahjahanpur	25	22	9	23
Kanpur Nagar	90	82	13	35
Eastern				
Gonda	4	6	13	34
Gorakhpur	28	24	11	27
Jaunpur	18	20	8	21
Hills				
Tehri Garhwal	96	13	45	-
Pithoragarh	97	93	14	33
Nainital	98	98	14	36
Budelkhand				
Jhansi	14	12	25	65
Laltipur	5	2	26	76
Jalaun	88	82	8	28

It is further interest to note from Table 6 that husband-wife communication with regard family size did occur soon after marriage and was obviously much higher among the under 20 age group than all couples suggesting a change in attitude towards family life among the younger generation. While interspousal communication regarding family size in the early stages of marriage was reported by more than half of the teenage wives from the Bundelkhand and

Western Uttar Pradesh regions, it was reported by almost a third of the married teenagers in the other areas as well.

This again suggests that a thinking process for regulating family size has already started among young people and needs to be given shape by providing them with proper guideance, counseling and services. The use of the media as well as the introduction of family life education in both formal and non-formal settings would be effective in fulfilling their unmet family planning needs and thereby in lowering teenage fertility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The contribution of teenage wives in Uttar Pradesh to the total fertility of the state is about 15 per cent. The results obtained from the larger Baseline Survey of Uttar Pradesh from which the present data have been drawn reveal that literacy has a very high positive association with age at marriage of girls and an inverse relationship with the proportion of married couples among teenagers. So also, the age at marriage and the proportion married among teenage girls have a significant impact on fertility.

These relationships suggest that measures should be taken to increase the female age at marriage through education and counseling efforts. The study further reveals that a reasonably high-unmet need for spacing children exists among teenage couples. This, combined with two other interesting findings that the media has made an appreciable impact on them in terms of conveying the family planning message and that teenage couples do discuss family size in the early stages of their marriage should give enough base to policy makers and program managers to make concerted efforts to address the family planning needs of these young couples. Family life education, proper information and counseling prior to marriage, counseling and appropriate services soon after marriage, together with the effective use of the media in this effort would go a long way in reducing adolescent fertility and improving the health of young mothers and their children.

The Major Recommendations therefore are:

- The effective use of the media in preventing early marriage and childbearing emphasizing the health rationale).

- Pre-marital counseling of adolescent, especially those who are about to be married, about the health risks of early marriage and childbearing, economic and other factors that make for a secure future and so on, in order to delay marriage and/or postpone the first child.

- Measures to increase female literacy/educational levels as they have a very high impact on both the age at marriage and birth timing.

- The introduction of family life education in the school curricula as also for the large out-of-school sector including appropriate guidance and accessible contraceptive services to young people who are married.

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