

Fertility Preference among Married Women in Sri Lanka: The Role of Modern Contraceptive Technology

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This study attempts to explore the role of modern contraceptive technology in determining the fertility preference of married women in Sri Lanka. For the past few decades the use of modern contraceptive technology has played a vital role in fertility transition in Sri Lanka. However, the effect of modern contraceptive technology on current fertility preference among married women is not adequately addressed in the fertility literature on Sri Lanka. As fertility behavior is shaped by current fertility preference, this would determine the size and growth of the future population. Therefore, addressing this research issue is very important in maintaining a sustainable fertility level among communities in Sri Lanka. In addition, the paper examines other factors, such as socioeconomic and demographic factors affecting the fertility decision.

The data for this study was obtained from the secondary data derived from the 2006/2007 Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics. The sample of 19,872 households, 14,692 ever-married women, aged 15-49 years, who slept in the household the previous night were chosen for the survey. A multi-stage stratified sampling method was used. In this survey, the women were interviewed about their nuptiality, fertility, fertility regulation and preferences, infant and child mortality, and health. The present analysis focuses mainly on the fertility preferences and use of contraceptives. Bi-variate and multi-variate (binary logistic regression) analyses were used. The dependent variable is whether they prefer a large family or a number of children above the replacement level considered the 'Ideal number of children of married women'.

The findings revealed that modern contraceptive technology has played a significant role in deciding family size. It also found a significant difference between the fertility desires and fertility decisions that exist especially among estate sector women. Though, the higher fertility preference exists among communities, the availability of modern contraceptive technology has lowered the fertility decision among married women. Furthermore, other factors, such as education, economic status and community level characteristics have a significant impact on fertility preference among married women in Sri Lanka. Moreover, still, the Muslim community has a high fertility preference as well as higher fertility. These findings suggest that modern contraceptive technology can be used to reduce fertility differences among communities.

Keywords: fertility preference, contraceptive technology, ideal number of children