

# Impact of Education on Female's Age at Marriage

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## INTRODUCTION

Education has often been considered a major means through which individuals fertility behaviour is rationalized to suit the individuals needs and capabilities. Indeed, most of the investigators in this field have found negative relation between parents level of education and fertility performance. For instance, Heer and Janowitz found negative correlations between education and fertility for the United States national data and Schultz and Cain and Weininger found negative correlation for Taiwan Puerto Rico and Greece. The nature of relationship between education and fertility was the subject of exploration by various scholars who found that general education effects fertility behaviour through changing the circumstances surrounding the individuals decisions in this field. Education may contribute to a better fertility control by helping to develop the women's knowledge and use of contraceptives and by causing a delay in the age at marriage, which in turn may affect fertility performance. As such general education have been considered a primary developmental approach to any effective population policy.

Most studies in this field relate fertility to the women's educational level and largely neglect the impact of the men's education. The approach as probably satisfactory for developed societies due to the fact with the eradication of illiteracy and effective compulsory education in these societies, the chances of large educational gap between husband's and wife's are limited. But the picture is not the same in developing countries where major differences exists in the educational attainment of males and females. In these circumstances, wide differences between husband and wife's education are much more likely to exist; consequently in dealing with India, it is important to study the actual effect of the educational level of each of the parents on the age at marriage. As Eastern U.P. is a thickly populated region with high illiteracy and low per capita income, so it is obvious to focus attention on the region especially for knowing the existing situation of demographic behaviour, i.e. Age at marriage and it's changing magnitude due to the impact of various levels of education.

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## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the data collected in a survey entitled "Rural Development and Population Growth" -- A Sample Survey 1978" under a research project conducted by the Demographic Research Centre, Banaras Hindu University in the year 1978.

Data were collected in three types of the villages namely Semi-urban, Remote and Growth-centres representing different level of socio-economic developments. The villages of Varanasi Tehsil were classified into two strata according to their distance from Varanasi city (boundary of Nagar Mahapalika). The villages having a distance of less than 3 kms were classified in the first stratum known as semi-urban and rest of the villages were classified in the second stratum called remote villages. Eight and six villages were then selected from these stratum and five villages were selected as growth-centre where sugar mills have been established recently or a vast network of carpet weaving has been created. All the households in these 19 villages were surveyed. Here stratified Random Sampling procedure was applied. Total number of households and eligible-couples (if both partners are alive and female is not exceeding 49 years of age) surveyed were 3514 and 1894 respectively. Age at marriage was estimated by age-wise (at consummation of marriage) distribution of eligible couples by applying Measure of Central Tendency, i.e. Median for various level of education.

## Educational Status of a Family

The educational status of a family may be determined on the basis of educational levels of all the members of the family, as below:

$$\text{Edu. St.} = \frac{2}{3} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Average education of males 15 years of age} \\ \text{+Maximum education of males 15 years of age} \\ \text{(Including females (under study) 15 years of age.} \end{array} \right.$$

Appropriate scores have been assigned to each level of education. Scores assigned vary from 0 to 10. In order to estimate the educational status some combination of scores have been made which have been put as low, lower middle, middle, high and very high status.

## Weights for Average and Maximum Education

<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>SCORES</u>
Illiterate	0
(1-4) class	1
(5-7) class	2
(8-9) class	3
(10-11) class	4
(12-13) class	6
(14-15) class	8
(16-above) class	10

The grouping for various educational status has been made as below:

<u>Educational Status</u>	<u>Scores</u>
Low	0
Lower Middle	(1-2)
Middle	(3-4)
High	(5-6)
Very High	7 and above

#### IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF A FAMILY ON FEMALE'S AGE AT MARRIAGE

With education, families are exposed to new ideas and new way of life and become more aware of themselves as effective element in the changing social behaviour. As shown in the Table 1, it is quite clear that female's age at marriage is undergone a considerable change in accordance with various educational status of a family, whatever may be the educational level of females. Difference of more than 1.5 years in female's age at marriage is observed from Low to Very high educational status group.

Table 1  
Distribution of Female's Age at Marriage According to Educational Status of Households

Types of villages	Educational Status	Low	Lower Middle	Middle	High	Very High
		Semi-urban	14.52	14.72	14.64	14.53
Remote	15.03	15.28	15.54	15.93	16.50	
Growth-centre	14.82	15.62	15.76	17.57	16.12	

Although, overall age at marriage in remote villages is higher than those in the villages of semi-urban and growth-centres. However, more changes in semi-urban is observed from low to very high status group. Very slow change can be witnessed in age at marriage of those belonging to low, lower middle, middle and high educational status group but rapid change is seen from high to very high status group.

#### IMPACT OF HUSBAND'S EDUCATION ON FEMALE'S AGE AT MARRIAGE

Table 2 reveals a positive relationship between the husband's educational level and female's age at marriage. Here, it is clear that with the onset of literacy of husband the average increase in female's age at marriage will be more than 1.5 years. Within illiterates, age at marriage can be ordered as below:

Remote > Growth-centres > Semi-urban

But the magnitude of overall change in female's age at marriage due to attaining higher education is observed as:

Semi-urban > Growth-centres < Remote

From the Table 2 it can be quoted that at the upper most strata of husband's education female's age at marriage is approximately same in all three types of villages but it differs at the lowest strata of education.

Table 2  
Distribution of Female's Age at Marriage According to Husband's Educational Level

Types of villages	Female's education					
	Illiterate	(1-4) class	(5-7) class	(8-9) class	(10-11) class	(12-13) class and above
Semi-urban	14.62	14.85	14.47	15.35	15.10	16.34
Remote	15.16	15.36	15.60	15.77	15.93	16.34
Growth-centres	14.99	15.49	15.77	15.36	16.15	16.22

#### IMPACT OF FEMALE'S EDUCATION ON FEMALE'S AGE AT MARRIAGE

Table 3 shows a strong and positive relationship between female's education and their age at marriage. A rapid increase in female's age at marriage is observed from lowest to upper most strata of educational level. Due to onset of literacy an increase in female's age at marriage is seen 4.19, 1.63, and 3.21 years respectively in semi-urban, remote and growth-centres. Obviously, it can be briefed as saying "female's education is strong enough to achieve a optimal delay in age at marriage so that female's fertility performance can be limited."

Table 3  
Distribution of Female's Age at Marriage According to Females Education

Type of villages	Female's education					
	Illiterate	(1-4) class	(5-7) class	(8-9) class	(10-11) class	(12-13) class and above
Semi-urban	14.64	16.10	16.00	16.50	17.50	18.83
Remote	15.37	16.57	16.45	16.87	17.00	18.00
Growth-centres	15.29	16.02	16.08	16.77	17.93	18.50

#### CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

It seems clear that the education is a major means to delay in age at marriage and hence to lower fertility level.

Findings indicate that educating the females results in a more substantial increase in age at marriage and this increase continues with educational attainment. Furthermore, the effect of female's education on female's age at marriage is at its maximum at higher level of their education. The evidence, therefore, suggests that the effects of education on fertility are heavily influenced by the female's educational level. And indeed, the education of females is a key demographic variable which should be given high priority in any effective fertility reduction policy. The returns of education differ among Indian men and women as men may be able to become highly educated and continues to lead traditional lives but educated females appear not to be able to do so to the same extent. Educated women lead lives which are demographically and socially more modern, i.e., later age at marriage, maintain lower fertility.

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