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KEY WORD : FERTILITY/NEPAL/1986/1996/SOCIOECONOMIC
VARIABLES/ IDEATIONAL
VARIABLES/VARIATION/DECLINE

BAL RAM BHUI: SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND MARITAL
FERTILITY IN NEPAL, 1986 AND 1996. THESIS ADVISOR: BOONLERT
LEOPRAPAI, Ph.D.; CHURNRURTHAI KANCHANACHITRA, Ph.D. 125 p.
ISBN 974-588-905-9

The study aimed at examining the determinants of fertility at two periods of time to delineate the features of fertility transition in Nepal. The question of interest in this study is whether socioeconomic factors or ideational factors are the major causes of fertility transition. The study, however, argues that socioeconomic development could primarily explain more variation in fertility than the diffusion variables in Nepal.

Currently married women's samples of 5,133 from 1986 Nepal Fertility and Family Planning Survey (NFFPS) and 7,982 from 1996 Nepal Family Health Survey (NFHS) were used for the analysis. A set of workable socioeconomic and ideational indicator variables were identified. The analysis employed a range of bivariate and multivariate techniques and test statistics.

The status of currently married women has improved in terms of socioeconomic and ideational factors, and fertility and child mortality have declined at the same time.

In 1986, among the variables analyzed, in addition to age and number of previous births, child death and ideal number of children were the key determinants of fertility. The picture changed in 1996 with, in addition to child death and ideal number of children, more factors pertaining to socioeconomic factors and ideational factors came up to have independent effects on fertility.

What follows from the study is that the fertility situation in 1986 could be interpreted to be in the early stage of transition. Coming up of most socioeconomic and ideational factors to have a significant effects on fertility in 1996 suggests that the pattern of determinants of fertility has changed.

The socioeconomic factors alone are not responsible for fertility differentials at two periods of time, instead the change in ideational factors explained the fertility differentials over time. However, amount of variation explained by socioeconomic variables is more than the that of ideational variables.

Therefore, to accelerate the fertility transition in Nepal, it is most desirable that the women's status be up-lifted both at the micro and macro levels. Given the adequate pace and level of socioeconomic development in the country, the family planning program would have synergetic effects on fertility transition.