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## EFFECTS OF FEMALE EDUCATION ON FERTILITY AND INFANT MORTALITY

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### Abstract:

Education is a direct and powerful indicator of the status of population and has a contributing effect which causes variations in both the levels of fertility and infant mortality. Female education is directly related to the status of women, their age at marriage, decision making power and the capability to access health care services. That means female education has its impact on their demand for children and the survival of their children. The present paper aims to study female education in India and its effects on fertility and infant mortality in India. The entire study is based on secondary data obtained from census data and SRS statistical reports. It is clear from the results that the general fertility rate and the infant mortality rate decreases with the increase in the level of education of females.

Keywords: Female Education, General Fertility Rate, Infant Mortality Rate.

### Introduction:-

Education means an all round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. The imperative character of education for individual growth and social development is now accepted by everyone. Investment in the education of its youth considered as most vital by all modern nations. Such an investment understandably acquires top priority in developing countries. Education plays a key role in individual's wellbeing and society's Economic, cultural and social progress.

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's rights movements.

A woman has to play three roles in the course of her life. Each of these roles expects some duties from her. It is only with the help of education that she would be able to do them successfully. The first duty of a woman is to be a good daughter. The second duty is to be a good wife and third duty is to be a good mother. Education teaches a woman what she should be. It also teaches her how she should do it to be good daughter, a good wife and a good mother. Many men spend their evening time at clubs and societies. The mother exercises a very great influence over the lives of her children. She is able to mould their thoughts and character. If she is educated, she will make such impression on the mind of her children that will enable them in the later life to grow into a great man. Hence it is very necessary that women should be educated. An educated girl is more important than an educated boy. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources,

but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of fertility rate, infant mortality rate and growth of the population. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. While the male literary rate was more than 75% according to the 2001 Census, the female literacy rate was 54.16% and according to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 82.14 while female literacy rate is 65.46 only.

There are various studies brought out clearly the impact of female education on reduction of fertility. Education depresses the fertility by raising the age at marriage, strengthening the propensity to be in labour force, fostering the favourable attitude towards small size norm and improving the awareness and use of family planning methods ( Patnaik 1985;Arora 1990 )

Education is treated as one of the decisive and highly influential factor in reproductive behavior (Josipovic 2007). Education affects reproductive behavior of women up to marked extent and influencing fertility by reducing it. Education has become one of the most important modern social factor that influence fertility. Female education is more inversely related with fertility than male education. It is seen that better educated women have more attitude towards fertility control as they are more likely to seek professional advice, use a contraceptive technique (Brolchain 1988).A United Nations study (1993) in rural Maharashtra supported the role of female education as determinant of fertility change by affecting the delay of age at marriage and use of contraceptives to limit family size.

Nahar and Rahman (2006) examined the factors associated with women's age at first marriage and birth. They documented that age at marriage was steadily rising in rural areas of Bangladesh, and the increase was strongly associated with increased female education. However education of women has opposite effects on childbearing and infant mortality. There was an indication that educated women tend to have their first birth as early as possible after marriage.

The present study aims at observing education level of female population in India, the effects of it on the fertility and infant mortality in India. The study is based on the secondary data collected and computed from the census report 2011 and the SRS report 2013.

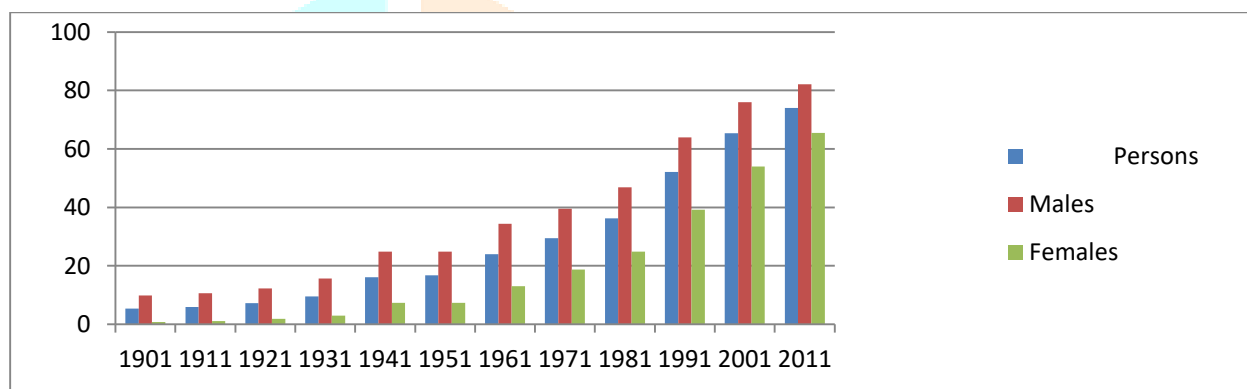
### **Level of Female Education**

Though equality for women is guaranteed by constitution, they lagging behind the males as far as levels of educational attainment is concerned. Although free and compulsory education has now made a fundamental right for all children from the age six to fourteen and in article 45 of the Indian Constitution , provisions has been made for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years. But these declarations are not sufficient to combat with age old gender biased mind set of male dominated Indian society. The need of the hour indeed is the change of patriarchal mindset so as to make all such provisions meaningful.

Education is necessary in a society and female education is particularly significant. Educating a girl child is one of the most effective means to counter gender discrimination and enhance status of women; and literacy of would surely contribute much more effectively in abolishing gender inequality. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them. The educated women can recognize the importance of health care of the family. They can help in producing better citizens by educating their children properly. Moreover, educational attainment of women is said to be enhancing the women's earning capabilities, development of taste for modern consumption standards and also their reproductive career of women.

The social benefits of educating girls are far greater than that of educating males. Especially female education has powerful effects on total fertility rate, the infant mortality rate and child health. Nobody can deny the fact that education has a strong bond with health, family care, wellbeing and employment of children and youth. Thus it is the education of mother which can play a greater role in the development of a nation. In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the state governments and central government through various schemes and programmes over the last 62 years and above all, the United Nation's enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India for several reasons. The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census.

**Figure I Literacy Rate in India**



Source: Constructed from Census Report 2011

According to the Table I the pre-Independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor spurt in comparison to literacy rate of men. This is witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7 % to 7.3 % where as the literacy rate of men has risen from 9.8 % to 24.9 % during these four decades. During the post- independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. However the literacy rate of male has increased from 25% in 1951 82.14 % in 2011. Surprisingly the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981 - 2011. The growth is almost 9 times e.g. 7.9 % in 1951 and 65.46in2011.

Table I Levels of Female Education of India

Education levels	Percentage of female population
<b>Illiterate</b>	<b>31.5</b>
<b>Total Literate</b>	<b>68.5</b>
Without Formal Education	2.1
Below Primary Education	8.8
Primary Education	12.1
Middle	19.3
X	13.7
XII	7.2
Graduate and above	5.1

Source : Census Report 2011

As per the above table out of the total female population 68.5 % is literate, out of which 2.1 have no formal education and 8.8 percentage of female population have only below primary level education. The percentage of females who have middle level of education is 19.3 . Only 5.1 percentage females have higher education. The analysis shows that a greater majority of female literates in India only have only primary or below primary education.

### General Fertility Rate by the Level of Female Education

Table II General Fertility Rate by the Level of Female Education

Education levels	Percentage of female population		
	India	Rural	Urban
Illiterate	83	87	60.5
Total Literate	79.1	88	61.5
Without Formal Education	92.6	95.6	77.9
Below Primary Education	101.2	109.2	73.3
Primary Education	89.7	96.4	69.9
Middle	77	83.8	60.2
X	65.4	71.7	54.9
XII	65.7	76.5	53.9
Graduate and above	74.7	93.2	66.5

Source : Census Report 2011

As per the table the general fertility rate is declining with the increase in the level of education. The general fertility rate is higher among the illiterates and it is 83% in India. It shows as 87% and 60.5% in the rural and urban areas respectively. The general fertility rate of the literates is 79.1% in India where it is 88% rural areas and 61.5% in urban areas . The fertility rate is higher among the female group who have below primary level education and 101.2%. This trend is there in both the rural and urban areas. That means in general the fertility rate shows an inverse relation with the level of education.

## Infant Mortality Rate by Mothers Education

Table III Infant Mortality Rate by Mothers Education

Educational Level	India	Rural	Urban
No Education	68.5	69.2	64.1
Total Literate	40.7	45.8	34.0
1-8 complete	54.7	56.8	49.2
9-10 years complete	41.4	47.3	30.9
>10 years complete	26.2	33.2	21.7

Source : Census Report 2011

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) which is defined as the deaths of infants of age less than one year per thousand live births is considered as a sensitive indicator of living and socio-economic conditions of a country. The high IMR of a country indicates the unmet health needs, unfavourable environmental factors, and low health and socio-economic status of its population. The above table clearly reveals the inverse relationship between mothers or female education and infant mortality rate. That means the educated mothers take better care about the health of their children. Among the illiterates the infant mortality rate is 68.5 percentage while it is only 40.7 percentage among the literates. As the educational level increases the rate of infant mortality shows a declining trend. This trend is the same both in the rural as well as urban areas.

### Conclusions

The above analysis shows that now in India more than 60% of the female population is literate. Among the literate greater percentage have only primary education or below it. The general fertility rate shows declining trend with the increase in education. In India the infant mortality rate is higher among the illiterates. Thus it can be said that females with better education are showing lower general fertility and the infant mortality rates or they are more conscious about their future generation.

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