



## Linking Population Growth with Environment

### KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT** Human demographic dynamics, such as the size, growth, distribution, age composition, and migration of populations, are among the many factors that can lead to environmental change. This study explores population, health, and environment connections, identifying our accomplishments, current challenges, and priorities. Data were collected from a household survey of 400 married men and women. The results indicate that the present generations which are educated practice well planned family planning among other respondents. The most striking result observed was there is a decrease in no. of off springs from the past three generations. The key factors that are affecting the family planning in rural areas were identified as lack of awareness, lack of facilities, belief of family, orthodox nature of elders in family etc. It is also concluded that environmental problems are no longer viewed as just a threat to quality of life but are considered a fundamental threat to human welfare.

### Introduction

As much as half of the Earth's total biological productivity has already been diverted to human use, depleting our natural resources and impairing the capacity of life-supporting ecosystems (Brown, 2004; Ehrlich, 1990; Green, 1992; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; United Nations Environment Programme, 2002; Wilson, 2002; World Resources Institute, 1998). Continued growth in the world's population will add to this environmental burden and, in places where growth is proceeding rapidly, will undetermined the prospects for socioeconomic development (Kendall, 2005; Population Summit of the World's Scientific Academies, 1993; Wilson, 2002).

A recent article in the Bulletin of the World Health Organization (WHO) argues that voluntary and rights-based family-planning programs are critical for developing countries to slow population growth and conserve the environment because rapid population growth and several other factors (e.g., climate change) may act cumulatively to deteriorate the environment and increase the vulnerability of humans to natural disasters (Bryant et al. 2009). Indeed, family planning has long been used to achieve the desired fertility levels, as well as to manage the timing and spacing of births (World Health Organization (WHO) 2009). However, the connection between family planning and environmental change remains little explored by the research community.

Family planning generally refers to the process of planning births as well as the means to implement that process. In this article, family planning means the planning decisions and outcomes of such decisions related to the number, timing, and spacing of births. The present work aims to understand an enhanced appreciation of the Family Planning - Environment relationship in urban and rural areas. An attempt has been made to refocus the attention of environmentalists on the importance of population trends to environmental sustainability and identify prevention of unintended pregnancy as potential common ground for environmentalists and family planning advocates.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Visakhapatnam is a major port and the second largest city in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the third largest city on the east coast of India after Kolkata and Chennai, with a population of approximately 1.3 million. Data were collected using a convenience sample of men and women in and around the city of Visakhapatnam. During a three months period, from December 2011 to March 2012, the investigators collected

the data. The mode of data collection was a personal interview with the respondents. The interviews were conducted for about 15- 20 minutes for each respondent. A total of 400 surveys were fully complete and subsequently used for data analysis. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire which was developed based on previous studies on Family planning.

### Results

The study has been designed and executed in two stages, the first stage being related data collection from the respondents. Second stage was interpretation and comparison of the data from the respondents, in order to bring out the factors responsible for population growth, practicing family planning and environmental degradation.

The respondents comprised of 56.5% males and 43.5% females. The maximum no. of respondents belonged to the age group 31 – 40 (41%) Fig - 1. Being urban residents most of the respondents were educated to a level of graduation (42%) and post graduation (28%). The change in the family structure has been remarkably observed through nuclear families (82.5%) and hardly (17.5%) hailed from a joint family. 50% of the respondents had 2 children, and note worthy is that most of the families (37%) have restricted themselves to single kid. 59.5% of the respondents were private employees and 22% of them were government servants. 13.5% of them were daily labors and 5% being engaged in other works. It was evident from the result that 44% of them had income in the range of 16 – 30, 000/- Rs per month. 31.5% earning less than 15,000/- Rs per month whereas 21% of them had income in the range of 31 – 50, 000/- Rs per month.

Community (37.5%) and hospitals (36.5%) shared almost equal half in creating awareness regarding family planning to the respondents. The perception of the respondents regarding family planning was in the order of 44% expressed to be birth spacing 34.5% reported as birth control and only 30.5% articulated it to be planning family life. 66.5% of the respondents were practicing family planning while 33.5% were not into it (Fig - 2). The types of contraception adopted by the respondents were periods planning (27.5%), use of condoms (22%), taking contraceptive pills (17%), others (13.5%) and only 10% of them having loop.

Obvious from the previous observation very few in urban were not practicing family planning. When asked for reasons 17.5% of articulated it to be lack of knowledge and 5% as tra-

ditional belief and opposed to family planning respectively. The intention of the research was to find out whether or not people take an active role in spreading awareness regarding family planning. For this question 59% of them responded positively as they usually talk to their friends and 41% of them did not. Out of the positive respondents only 45% were voluntary in trying to change the attitudes of others who were unaware or opposing to family planning but 14% of them did not try in this direction. When questioned for the possible reasons 36% of them articulated they were shy talking about it. A trifling number quoted the reason to be culture, religion and others (2.5%, 1%) (Fig - 3). The trends of off-springs from the past three generations were as follows: the present and their parents' generations had a maximum of 3 – 4 off springs (51.5% and 54%). Whereas the grandparents generation had only 35% with 3 – 4 off springs. 1 – 2 off springs were recorded to be 38% in the present generation, 21.5% in parents' generation and 27.5% in grandparent's generation. There was a remarkable decrease in the more than 5 off springs from the grandparents' generation 30% to parent's generation 24.5% and the present generation with only 10.5%.

Owing to the socio economic status the regular health problems were not observed in 81.5% of the respondents and 78.5% of them did not had any hereditary problems. 88.5% of the families do not have any member who falls sick frequently (Fig - 5). 71.5% of them articulated good health condition with 64% of the families having satisfactory women health. It is evident from the result that all the respondents were aware of the increased population effects on the environment owing to their educational status. When tried to understand their knowledge regarding the relationship between population and environment degradation only 33% had articulated in all areas whereas for 38% it was only food scarcity and 29% water scarcity. Very few (33%) were aware of other effects like resource depletion, land degradation and increase in demand of energy. Only 50% of them agree that the population should be controlled and their voluntary participation in spreading the awareness.

**Discussion**

The link between people and the environment is profound. Nothing affects the environment more than we do, people. The study shows that nearly 50% of the respondents to be women and their positive attitude towards population and environment. The highest respondents belong to middle age i.e between 31 – 40. Many studies reveal the relationship between the concern and age. It says that in general, younger generation tends to be more concerned about environmental quality than older generation. The extensive literature survey of Van Liere and Dunlap (1980) also stated 'age' as a dominant factor in determining the degree of environmental concern.

The demographic data of the study has shown that the respondents were educated. Education can be considered as a master key to all compartment of development. Income is also an important factor affecting fertility as well as health. The family, who have strong income source were found to be healthier and held high social status. There is a hypothesis that states "environmental concern is positively associated with social class as indicated by education, income and occupational prestige" (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980). In the present study, we found that a high proportion of respondents had knowledge of contraceptive methods. Provision of family planning services is the most direct intervention to slow population growth and assist environmental preservation (Kent & Mather, 2002).

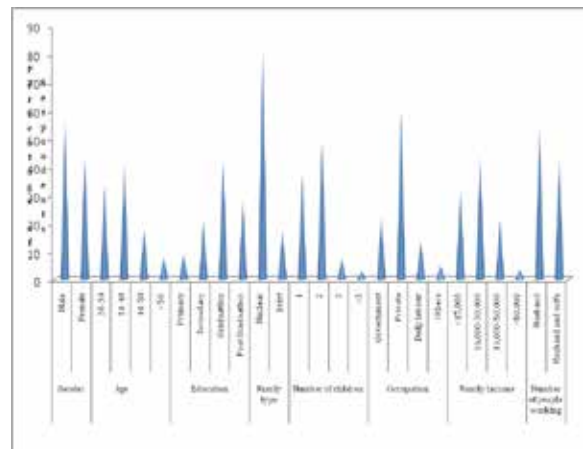
A remarkable transformation has been observed in the off springs from the past three generations. Where in the no. of off springs have been decreased drastically. As quoted by Population Action International and Population Justice Project: "The good news: there is already a global consensus on how to slow population growth, with programs that improve

human well-being at very little cost" holds to be true. It is understood from the study that the best of knowledge regarding the environmental degradation has been associated with the well educated people, For instance, when main causes of environmental degradation were asked, people from developing countries tends to raise factors as 'over population', 'incapability of government', 'lack of education', and 'technological problem' but people from developed countries tends to raise the 'individual consumption'.

**Conclusion**

There are multiple areas of mutual benefit for integrated family planning/ environment programming in the context of human well-being .The "freedom and choice" component is equally relevant to environmental conservation, reproductive health, and women's rights and empowerment actors. And both family planning and the environment have important roles to play in ensuring family and household security. More collaborative family planning and environmental efforts aimed at reducing inequities would better ensure sustainable community development as well as the right of individuals to achieve what they value. This strategy fits with recommendations from a recent survey among family planning experts regarding how to recast the central message of family planning, highlighting its relevance to reducing social inequity. It also helps meet needs not being addressed through conventional family planning approaches, needs that may respond well to new perspectives, new approaches, and new partners.

**Figure – 1 Demographic and Socio-economic data of the Respondents**



**Figure – 2 Awareness Regarding Family Planning and Contraception Adopted by the Respondents**

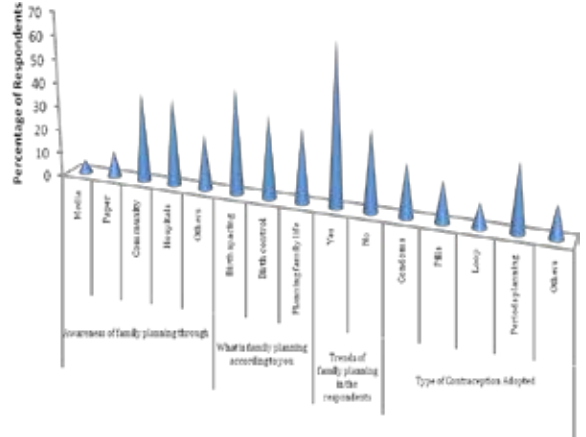


Figure – 3 Barriers for not Practicing Family Planning and No. of Off-springs from three generations in Respondents

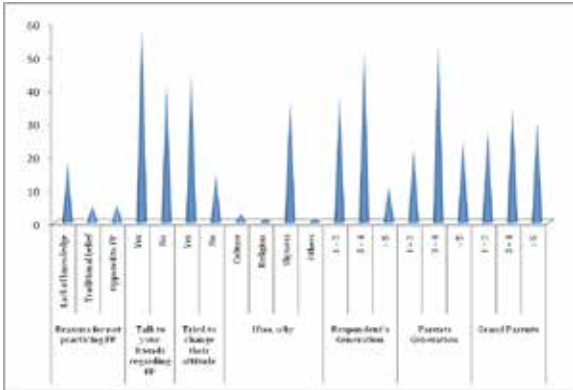


Figure – 4 Perceived Health Problems by Respondents

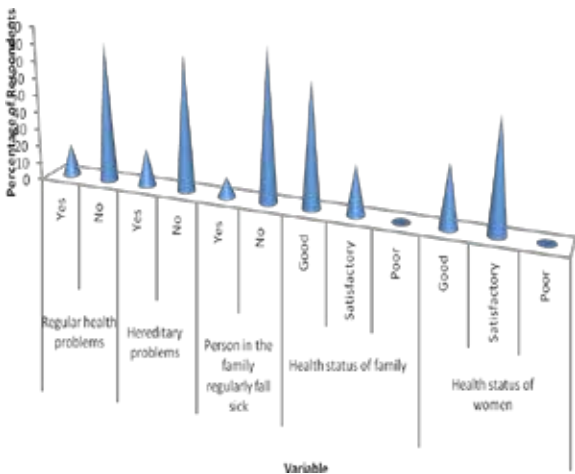
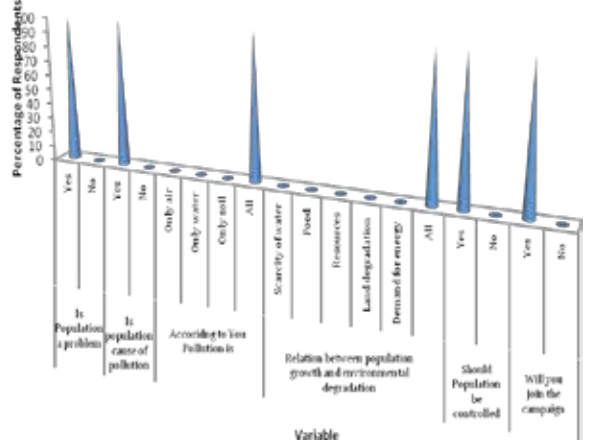


Figure – 5 Respondents Perception towards Environment and its Degradation



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