FACTORS AFFECTING FEMALE AGE AT MARRIAGE OF THE DEORIS OF ASSAM: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT The age of marriage particularly that of the female is an important area of study in fertility analysis. The woman who gets married in young age is exposed to conception throughout the most fecund period of her life and thus influencing the high fertility. There are many socio-economic and cultural factors which affect the female age at marriage of a particular society. The Deoris are one of the plains Schedule Tribes of Assam, who are likely to exhibit certain peculiar socio-cultural and demographic characteristics which are different from those of other tribes and non tribal population of Assam. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the factors affecting the age at marriage among the Deoris of Assam and their relative significance.

KEYWORDS : Age at marriage, Fertility, Deori, Factors.Significance

0.1 INTRODUCTION:

Marriage involves the first step towards the construction of a biological family and thus it directly influences the household fertility. The age at marriage particularly that of the female is an important area of study in fertility analysis. The woman who gets married in young age is exposed to conception throughout the most fecund period of her life and thus influencing the high fertility. The lower the age at marriage of a woman, the higher will be the duration of her reproductive period and hence fertility is likely to be higher. Thus, there generally exists an inverse relationship age at female marriage and fertility. Most of the studies conducted in this respect have found negative relationship between the two.

Bhat & Rajan (1997) and Visaria (1999) opine that female age at marriage is noted as an important factor in decline of fertility. **K. Srinivasan (1998)** also opines that as biologically fertility is highest in late teens and early twenties, early marriage has greater impact on fertility that late marriage. **Driver, E.D, Agarwalla, S.N, Visaria, Leela, Goyal, Chakranorty** have also found negative relationship between age at marriage and fertility

The Deoris are one of the plains Schedule Tribes of Assam, who are likely to exhibit certain peculiar socio-cultural and demographic characteristics which are different from those of other tribes and non tribal population of Assam. Ethnically they are affiliated to the Indo-Mongoloid group and their *'Deori language'* also belongs to the Tibeto-Burman of the great family of Sino-Tibetan languages. According to 2011 census the total Deori population in Assam is 43,750 which constitute 1.13% of the total tribal population of the state. They are mainly concentrated in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar and Jorhat.

0.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The Deoris of Assam have their own socio-cultural features which might influence their fertility behaviour. The female age at marriage of the Deoris is affected by different beliefs and customs associated their society. The basic objective of the paper is to examine different factors affecting female age at marriage of the Deoris of Assam and their relative significance. The considering factors in this respect are educational level of the female (ELF), education of the parents (EP), the age at menarche (AM), order of birth of the female (OB), income of the family (IF), type of the family (TF) and occupation of the female (OF).,

0.3 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY:

The paper is prepared on the basis of primary data collected from the field study at three Deori villages of Lakhimpur district of Assam in the month of December 2017. Data pertaining to the year collected through personal interview with the respondent (women) households through an interview schedule. . The data so collected have been analysed by using appropriate statistical tools to assess the effects of factors on female age at marriage of the Deoris .
The surveyed three villages are –

a) **Bordeori goan** under Narayanpur RC, in the East (about 3km) from the Narayanpur centre.

b) **Kinapather no-2 deori goan** under Narayanpur RC in the north (about 2.5 km) from the Narayanpur centre.

c) **Bahgora deori goan** under Bihpuria RC in the East (about 7 km) from the Bihpuria centre.

TABLE NO 1 Village-wise distribution of Surveyed Households with Sex wise Population

Sl No	Sample Village	No of Surveyed Household	Male	Female	Total population
1	Bordeori Goan (Narayanpur RC)	40	141	135	276
2	Kinapather No-2 deori Goan(Narayanpur RC)	35	130	129	259
3	Bahgora Deori Goan (BihpuriyaRC)	35	126	127	253
	Total	110	397	391	788

Source : Field Work, 2017

0.4 Data Analysis and Results:

To examine the influence of the above mentioned 7 factors on the female age at marriage of the Deoris, the following multiple regression analysis has been applied. In the regression model female age at marriage (FAM) is considered as the dependent variable which depends on the above mentioned 7 explanatory variables. In the present study, the mean age at marriage of the sample respondents is found to be 17.84 years and mean number of live births ever born to the Deori women is 3.03.

$$FAM\beta_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ELF_1 + \beta_2 EP_2 + \beta_3 AM_3 + \beta_4 OB_4 + \beta_5 IF_5 + \beta_6 TF_6 + \beta_7 OF_7 + U_1$$

Where, $FAM\beta_i$ (female age at marriage) is the dependent variable and I refers to i^{th} observation. β_0 is the intercept which gives the average female age at marriage when all the independent variables are set equal to zero. ELF, EP, AM --- are explanatory variables and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ -------- are the partial regression co-efficient. Partial regression co-efficient measures the change in the mean value of the dependent variable per unit change of an independent variable, keeping all other independent variables constant. $'U_1'$ is the stochastic variable which includes those variables influence the dependent variable but not included in the regression model. The following table: 3.15 summarized results of the effects of all the seven independent variables on female age at marriage of the Deoris of Assam.

Table: 2 Female age at Marriage Determinants: Multiple Regression Results Dependent Variable: Female age at Marriage (FAM)

Regressor	Coefficient	't'-Ratio	Tolerance	VIF
Costant	0.772	---	----	---
ELF	0.756	- 4.186*	0.707	1.414
EP	0.617	- 1.594*	0.967	1.034
AM	0.656	- 0.524*	0.952	1.051
OB	0.050	- 0.659	0.902	1.081

IF	0.056	0.762	0.991	1.009
TF	0.252	2.458	0.645	1.458
OF	0.146	7.942*	0.686	1.457

R^2= 0.708,
f= 7.327 (Significant at 5% level)
* Significant at 5% level

It is seen from the table that the Multiple Regression Coefficient (R^2) is 0.708 which indicates that about 71% total variation of the dependent variable (FAM) has been explained by the 7 explanatory variables.

The results of the multiple regression shows that education level of female (ELF) age at menarche (AM), education of the parents (EP) and occupation of the female have been found to be significant factor determining the female age at marriage among the Deoris.

The estimated coefficient for education of the female is 0.756 indicates that as literacy increase by one unit, age at marriage increase by 0.756 units. Similarly, Parent's educations, age at menarche and occupation of the female have significant and positive influence on the age at marriage of the Deori women.

On the contrary, order of birth (OB) , income of the family (IF) and type of the family (TF) have no significant influence on age at marriage among the Deoris of Assam though theses variables have lesser influence in determining age at marriage of the Deori society.

0.5 CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion, it can be said that female education, age at menarche, parents education and occupation of female (employment either govt. or non govt. institutions) are the significant factors influencing the female age at marriage among the Deoris. Therefore to check the evils of early marriage among the Deoris, special programmes have to be formulated and implement to increase the education level among their society specially, female education. Improvement of educational status not only increases the age at marriage, it will also change their mindset. More Employment opportunities should be provided among the females and improve their living standard. Policies and programmes should be undertaken to make them aware of the evils associated with early marriage.

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