

ආශ්‍රිත ග්‍රන්ථ

1. රාශා හේමචන්ද්‍ර (ප්‍රසංග) (1972); **ලංකා විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයේ ලංකා ඉතිහාසය**; කැලණිය: විද්‍යාලංකාර විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය;
2. වික්‍රමසිංහ මාර්ටින් (1997); **සංහල සාහිත්‍ය නැගීම**; දෙහිවල: සීමාසහිත හිසර ප්‍රකාශකයෝ;
3. සන්නස්ගල, පීඩී (1964); **සිංහල සාහිත්‍යචංඡය**; කොළඹ: ලේක්හවුස් මුද්‍රණාලය;

Fertility levels of Sinhala and Muslim communities: A comparative study in the Dickwella Division

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Fertility denotes successful production of offspring. It is the natural capability of living beings to give life. In demography, fertility refers to the actual number of children born rather than the physical capability to produce children (fecundity). Human fertility depends on several factors such as nutrition, sexual behavior, culture, ethnicity, way of life, use of contraception socio economic determinants, nuptiality patterns and emotions. This study attempts to investigate the extent to which ethnicity and related factors have influenced the rates of fertility within each of the ethnic groups selected in the study area. As the main purpose of the study was to ascertain the region-specific differences in the fertility levels between the Sinhala and the Muslim communities, the Dickwella D.S. division in the Matara division was chosen for a close study. The reason being that, unlike in the whole district of Matara where the population is comprised of three communities namely the Sinhala (90%), Muslim (7%) and Indian Tamils (3%), the study area consisted of the two primary communities chosen for this study, namely the majority community (Sinhalese) and one of the minority communities (Muslims). Besides achieving the major objective of analyzing the differences in the fertility levels between the Sinhala and Muslim communities this study also aimed at identifying the factors that contributed to these differences by investigating the extent to which the socio-economic disparities (if any) had impinged on the differences in the fertility levels and the extent to which the population policies at the national level had impacted on the fertility levels of the two said communities.

The methodology adopted in this study was mainly quantitative with some clarifications sought through qualitative information. The sample population selected purposively was from two Grama Niladhari divisions within the chosen D.S. division. The relevant data was obtained from a purposively selected stratified random sample of thirty women representing different age groups and socio-economic levels. The data were processed using simple statistical techniques. In the analysis of the processed data and the interpretations of the findings qualitative information obtained on the cultural perspectives of the issues in hand were used.

The outcome revealed that the levels of fertility between the two communities were significant. A close study of the possible causes for the differences identified pointed to the mean age at marriage and related factors and adoption / non adoption of family planning methods and related cultural factors as the major causative factors. Among the major inferences obtained from these findings the differences pertaining to cultural practices appear to have been the most determinant.

Key words : fertility offspring, fecundity, disparity, inference,

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