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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND FERTILITY DECLINE IN SRI LANKA:
A DISTRICT BASED ANALYSIS**

Pushpika P. Masakorala

Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya

A decline has been seen during the last five decades in Sri Lanka's Fertility Rate, defined as the average number of children per woman. The total fertility rate has declined from five children per woman in 1960 to around two or less in 2010. This achievement is remarkable but questionable, because Sri Lanka has achieved such a low fertility rate without socio-economic development.

According to demographic transition theory, fertility decline should be paralleled by socio-economic development in the country. But researchers question how Sri Lanka has achieved low fertility without such development. Although the fertility rate has declined overall in Sri Lanka, it has not happened to the same extent in every part of the country leading to the observation of a spatial difference of fertility decline. This paper examines the concept of fertility in Sri Lanka, focusing on this spatial difference of fertility decline and the spatial difference of socio-economic development.

This research is based on secondary data. The unit of analysis is 25 districts in Sri Lanka. The necessary information is gathered from the Population Census, the Demographic and Health Survey, and the Statistical Abstracts of Sri Lanka. The relationship between fertility and related factors are analysed, correlationally using the fertility rate as the response variable.

According to this analysis, all variables tested show a negative relationship with the total fertility rate except urbanization. However, the relative effects of the variables on fertility vary considerably. Family planning variables and age of women at the first marriage have the highest correlation, while socio-economic variables have the lowest correlation with fertility. With time the strength of the relationship between fertility and socio-economic and demographic variables diminishes. But that relationship strength increases with family planning and women's status. There is a positive correlation between fertility and urbanization that contradicts the existing modernization theory of fertility decline. This may be due to factors such as high rates of birth registrations in the towns, due to the high demand for the national school.