



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the various economic and socio-cultural challenges in bringing down fertility rate in India. (250 words)

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Approach

- Explain the term fertility
- Enumerate various socio-cultural and economic challenges in bringing down the fertility rate in India
- Conclude by stressing on the need to control the population growth

Introduction

Fertility refers to the reproductive performance of an individual or a group. It can be studied from the statistics of births. The crude birth rate is an important measure of fertility for which only live births, that is, children born alive are taken into account.

Body

There are multiple socio-economic challenges that hinder in bringing down the fertility rate in India such as:

- All the religions of India except Buddhism, contain injunctions to their followers to breed and multiply. It is, therefore, not surprising that belief in high fertility has been strongly supported by religions and social institutions in India, leading to appropriate norms about family size.
- Another factor contributing to high fertility is the universality of the institution of marriage. Amongst the Hindus, a man is expected to go through the various stages of his life (Ashramas), performing the duties attached to each stage. Marriage is considered one such duty.
- Till recently, the custom in India required the Hindu girls to be married off before they entered puberty. Ultimately they bear children from an early age till they cross the age at which they are no longer biologically capable of bearing children.
- As in all traditional societies, in India too, great emphasis is laid on bearing children. A woman, who does not bear children, is looked down upon in society.
- The preference for a male child is deeply ingrained in Indian culture. The preference for sons is so high in the Indian society that a couple may continue to have several daughters and still not stop child bearing in the hope of having at least one son.
- Often, there is no economic motivation for restricting the number of children, because the biological parents may not necessarily be called upon to provide for the basic needs of their own children, since the extended family is jointly responsible for all the children born into it.
- As there is still a high level of poverty in India, especially in rural areas thus there is a tendency to reproduce more children so that there are more helping hands to earn for the family.
- Prevailing illiteracy in the Indian society, more so among women is also one of the factors for high fertility in India.
- Again, in the absence of widespread adoption of methods of conception control, the fertility of Indian women continues to remain high. Also there is a general lack of awareness among the

masses about various choices of contraception.

Conclusion

Rapid population growth has caused serious problems in the distribution of farmland and food supply, low personal income, a rise in the unemployment rate, and a rise in the illiteracy rate. This has prevented a rise in the standard of living among the people of the nation. Increasing literacy, creating awareness and providing adequate supply of various contraceptive choices can play an important role in controlling population growth.

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