UNIT 5 : SMALL FAMILY NORMS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- state the meaning of small family norms;
- explain the nature of small family norms;
- indicate the benefits of small family norms; and
- identify the barriers of small family norms.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

A small family is the need of the hour, especially in India where population explosion is a major problem confronting the country. Unless population growth in the country is checked with everyone adopting the small family norm, quality of life in our country will continue to be far below the global standards. While availability of food, health services and educational facilities in the developed countries are improving, these are continuously on the decline or are stagnant in our country because of the growing population. With too many people vying for too few services or products in the country, the quality of life is affected considerably in our country. Industrialization has resulted in tremendous changes in the life-

style of the people in the developed countries. Though a small percentage of the people in our country have a life-style that matches the western standards, a majority of the population are still below the poverty line because of unemployment and underemployment resulting from population explosion. If the living standards of the majority of Indians are to improve, everyone should adopt the small family norm. In this unit, we shall discuss the meaning, nature and advantages of small family norms. Again, we shall discuss here about the problems that arise while adopting small family norms.

5.3 MEANING OF SMALL FAMILY NORMS

Small family norm connotes control over the number of children. The rate of reproduction and the level of acceptance of family control methods are to a large extent influenced by what people consider as the ideal family size. Adoption of small family norms is today not only desirable but almost a necessity. It has become difficult to survive with a large family particularly because of rising cost of living, growing needs and necessities.It is a fact that a small family is a happy family. Lesser number of children is a boon not only to their parents but also to the country. They have better chances of food, clothing and education. Too many children are a burden for the society or family. Over-population is a bane. All the plans of progress and development stand nullified when the family is in trouble; happiness vanishes. One son and one daughter are ideal. Too many sons and daughters cause misery and unhappiness. They invite unnecessary trouble. In other words, too many children cause problems.

India was the first country in 1952 to implement established population policies, in a series of Five Year Plans starting from 1951. In the First Five Year plan, from 1951 to 1956, the Planning Commission had recognized the necessity of a population policy and had identified family planning as an important component of the legislation. Hence family planning had received 100% funding from the central government during that period. In the next five years, from 1956 to 1961, the method of sterilization was emphasized, and by the next 5 years, family planning

programs were placed as national priority.

In 1966, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was set up to manage the new population policy, called Small Family Norm that encouraged families to have only two children. The symbol for family planning health and contraception services is an inverted red triangle. A small family not only alleviates the problem of overpopulation at the national level but also benefits the welfare and health of individual families. This is because although India has a booming economic growth rate, there are not enough resources to withstand effective improvement among the large majority of the poor and sustain the flourishing economic growth rate. Therefore, to bring about qualitative change, it is an urgent need for the Indian government to curb the problem of overpopulation and opt for a slower population growth. However, the birth rate control method is not as effective as it should be, as there are no disincentives. Hence due to various factors such as religion, culture and social-economic, this is not widespread, especially in rural areas and urban slums.

5.4 NATURE OF SMALL FAMILY NORMS

The main motive behind small family norms is to control the population of the particular country. Every society should develop definite behavioural patterns to ensure a certain norm of family size. These behavioural patterns are mainly based on marriage, age of marriage, preferences for sex, values and roles of children etc. which automatically result in ensuring the normatively desired family size. The two extremes of the family size norm could extend from 'no child family' to 'as many children as God may will'. Within these two extremes, the norms vary from society to society, depending upon its socio-economic and health, particularly mortality status. One could expect change in family size norm corresponding to changes in socio-economic status of any given society. However, this change is not simultaneous because the normative values and behaviour patterns change at a slower pace as compared to economic progress. This cultural lag usually results in increased unhappiness in the individual families and society. It is one of the main goals of the national family planning

programmes of every country to bridge this gap and enable individual families to adjust to changing situations so that they can maximise the gains accruing to them as a result of overall socio-economic progress.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is meant by small family norm?

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Q 2: Write a note on family planning of India.

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Q 3: What is the main motive of small family norm?

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5.5 ADVANTAGES OF SMALL FAMILY NORMS IN POPULATION CONTROL

A small planned family has many advantages and benefits. The planning for a family starts from marriage at proper age. The safest age for the good health of both the mother and child is 20 to 30 years. The reasonable gap between two children will give mother sufficient time to replenish her body nutrients depleted during the earlier pregnancy. Discussed below are the advantages of small family norms in population control.

1) Advantages for Mother

- Small family norms help to maintain the health of the mother.
- It also helps to minimise the fear of unwanted pregnancy.
- Small family norms minimise the number of children and it helps to lessen strain and worry that arises from having many children.
- It helps the mother to give more time and energy to her children.
- It also helps the mother to spend more time on the education and vocation of her children.
- Small family norms provide better job opportunities to the mother

as she is then free from family problems that exists in large families.

- Small family norms help the mothers to save the health of children.

2) Advantages to Child:

- Child will have conducive atmosphere for his proper physical and psychological growth and development.
- Child gets proper nutrition, education, prenatal care and love.

3) Advantages to Father:

- Father can provide children with better education, comfort, food, clothing and recreation.
- He will be more relaxed and enjoy good health.
- He will improve living standards, better health and better quality of life.

4) Advantages for Community:

- Small family leads to conservation of natural resources and savings.
- Small family norm helps the nation to have enough schools, hospitals and other basic services.
- Small family yields more employment.
- Small family norms provide happiness, peace, harmony and prosperity among the people of a nation.

5.6 BARRIERS OF SMALL FAMILY NORMS

Different barriers of small family norms are discussed below:

1) Religious Barriers

- **Preference for Son:** In Indian society, desire or preference for a son is deeply rooted. The son is a religious necessity as he performs last rites of the parents believed to be necessary for the salvation of the soul. The son is also old age insurance to the parents.
- **God Given Children:** There is a religious belief among some sections of the society that it is the will of God that has bestowed

children to them.

2) Demographic Barriers:

- **Early Marriage:** Early marriage is prevalent in our society. Child marriage contributes to virtually every social problem that gives India a low ranking in women's right.
- **Lack of Adequate Knowledge of Family Planning Methods:** Contraceptive use is very low among married couples in India. Main reason behind this is lack of proper knowledge about family planning methods.
- **Large Family system:** For a long time, large family system provided facilities for the care and bringing up of children. Couples saw safety in large families. This also hampers the norm of small family.

3) Economic Barriers:

- **Low Standard of Living:** This is another barrier of small family norms. Low standard of living encourages particular section of people to indulge in sex play as entertainment.
- **Backward Agricultural Economy:** In India, which practised agriculture of the traditional type for a number of decades, a large number of children were considered as an advantage. Even if a few of them did not survive beyond ten to fifteen years, certain functions of economic nature like tending cattle or carrying out simple tasks in the fields could be fulfilled by the younger ones.

4) Educational Barriers:

- **Illiteracy of Masses:** Lack of mass literacy has been undoubtedly an important factor in having large families. Without adequate literacy and education, people remain unacquainted with the benefits of increased knowledge. They believe in superstitions and sometimes think that large families are the gift of God. They become fatalists.
- **Neglect of Girls' Education:** Lack of girls' education create different problems while adopting small family norms. As most

women have no knowledge about family planning due to lack of education, they pose an obstacle in the fulfilment of the dream of small family norms.

5) Recreational Barriers:

- **Lack of Means of Entertainment:** A substantial section of people for years have remained without adequate recreational facilities. This factor became responsible for them indulging in sexual activity and desiring pleasure from it.
- **More Leisure Time:** Main occupation of nearly 70% of Indian population is subsistence agriculture. Agriculture is unable to provide employment throughout the year. Thus there is lot of leisure time at their disposal. The easiest time pass for them has been to occupy themselves in sexual activities, resulting in large families.

In order to remove barriers of small family norms, Government should take certain measures such as:

- Provide adequate recreational facilities to the masses which will be effective for economic growth of the family and maintaining the norm of small family.
- Proper functional education regarding small family norms should be provided to poor and illiterate people of our country.
- Voluntary maternity of women should have a proper place of information in the health centres.
- Family planning programme should be made a people's programme.This will allow the couples to decide their family size and also the time spacing of their offspring.
- Role of voluntarily organisations is very important in this regard. Different Government and Non-Government Voluntary Organisations play effective and operational role in controlling the population of our country.
- Modernised improved methods should be introduced in the agricultural operations throughout the country for raising its productivity. This can also raise the standard of living of the people and indirectly reduce

the birth rate.

- Mass-media, song, drama and extension education are some methods through which the people are approached and educated for family planning programme.
- Opening family planning centres throughout the country can play an effective role in limiting the size of the family.
- The Government should introduce various incentive schemes for adopting small family norms such as cash incentive, preference for employment, preference for insurance, promotion etc.

To conclude, it is said that family size influences the overall family welfare and happiness of a country. Its influence on the wellbeing of children is particularly marked. To plan for small family with one or two children is to plan for happy family.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Write the benefits of small family norms for the father of the family.

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Q 5: Write about recreational barriers of small family norms.

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

- Unless the population growth in the country is checked with all the people adopting the small family norm, the quality of life in our country will continue to be far below the global standards.
- If the living standards of the majority of Indians are to improve, everyone should adopt the small family norm.

- Adoption of small family norms is today not only desirable but almost a necessity. It has become difficult to survive with a large family particularly because of rising cost of living, growing needs and necessities.
- A small family not only alleviates the problem of overpopulation at the national level but also benefits the welfare and health of individual families.
- Every society should develop definite behavioural patterns to ensure a certain norm of family size. These behavioural patterns are mainly based on marriage, age of marriage, preferences for sex, values and roles of children etc. which automatically result in ensuring the normatively desired family size.
- The two extremes of the family size norm could extend from 'no child family' to 'as many children as God may will'. Within these two extremes, the norms vary from society to society, depending upon its socio-economic and health, particularly mortality status.
- A small planned family has many advantages and benefits. The planning for a family starts from marriage at proper age. The safest age for pregnancy for health of both the mother and child is 20 to 30 years. A reasonable gap between two children will give the mother sufficient time to replenish her body nutrients depleted during the earlier pregnancy.
- Main barriers of small family norms are: preference for son, god given children, early marriage, lack of adequate knowledge of family planning methods, large family system, low standard of living, backward agricultural economy, illiteracy of masses, neglect of girls' education, lack of means of entertainment, more leisure time, etc.



5.8 FURTHER READING

1) Aggarwal, J. C. (2013). *Population Education.* New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
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6) Kapoor & Kapoor (2013). Population Education. Guwahati: EBH Publishers.
7) Nanda, S. K. (2002). *Population Education-An Informative Update.* Delhi: Doaba House.
8) Rao, V. K. (2001). *Population Education.* Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation.



5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The small family norm connotes control over the number of children. The rate of reproduction and the level of acceptance of family control methods are to a large extent influenced by what people consider as the ideal family size.

Ans to Q No 2: India was the first country in 1952 to implement established population policies, in a series of Five Year Plans starting from 1951. In the First Five Year plan, from 1951 to 1956, the Planning Commission had recognized the necessity of a population policy and had identified

family planning is identified as an important component of the legislation. Hence family planning received 100% funding from the central government during that period. In the next five years, from 1956 to 1961, the method of sterilization was emphasized, and by the next 5 years, family planning programs were placed as national priority. In 1966, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was set up to manage the new population policy, called Small Family Norm that encouraged families to have only two children.

Ans to Q No 3: The Main motive behind small family norms is to control the population of the particular country.

Ans to Q No 4: The benefits of small family norms for the father of the family are:

- Father can provide children with better education, comfort,food, clothing and recreation.
- He will be more relaxed and enjoy good health.
- He will improve living standards, better health and better quality of life.

Ans to Q No 5: Different recreational barriers of small family norms are:

- Lack of Means of Entertainment: A substantial section of people for years have remained without adequate recreational facilities. This factor became responsible for them indulging in sexual activity and desiring pleasure from it.
- More Leisure Time: Main occupation of nearly 70% of Indian population is subsistence agriculture. Agriculture is unable to provide employment throughout the year. Thus there is a lot of leisure time at their disposal. The easiest time pass for them has been to occupy themselves in sexual activities, resulting in large families.