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## REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CORRELATES AMONG THE BENGALI MUSLIM WOMEN OF CACHAR DISTRICT, ASSAM, INDIA

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### Abstract:

*The present paper intends to study the fertility performance of 151 ever married Bengali Muslim women of Bhaurikandi Part-II and Ganganagar Part-I village of Cachar district, Assam. The data have been collected by household census followed by interview method among the women who have at least one live birth and falls between 15-49 years of age. The study reveals that mean conception, live birth and pregnancy wastage of the Bengali Muslim women are 4.38, 4.19 and 0.22 respectively. Mean pregnancy is high in those women who got married before 18 years (4.86). Average conception is found to be high (4.85) in consanguineous marriages. Mean pregnancy is high among illiterate (5.25) and non working women (4.40). Annual family income shows a low positive correlation with pregnancy but it is (mean) low in highest income category (3.97). Fertility rate is low among the women who live in joint families (3.61).*

### KEY WORDS:

Age at Marriage, Consanguinity, Education, Occupation, Family Income and Family Type.

### INTRODUCTION:

Studies of fertility trends and determinants are high on demographers' research agenda in developing countries. The interest in these aspects in India to a great amount stimulated by the notion that high fertility being problematic in this developing country. Fertility is one of the most important components of demography as well as of population change. Fertility refers to the actual production of children in a population, rather than the physical capability to participate in reproduction which is termed as fecundity. It is an optimistic force due to which every society replenishes itself. In the study of fertility besides understanding biological factors of fertility, it is also essential to know the effects of a multiplicity of socio-cultural aspects which are associated with it (Raj, 2005). Several studies that dealt with fertility mentioned that fertility is affected by many socio-economic variables like- economic condition, education of the couple, occupation of the couple, social status of the women, family system, attitude towards children, age at marriage, religious beliefs and customs, urbanization, political factors, etc. (Khalifa, 1976; Barua and Das, 1981; Das and Saikia, 1999; Ahmed, 2003). All the above mentioned factors have a strong impact on fertility and educations seem to have the most vital influence on it.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In India, there are several reports on fertility and its relationship with socio-economic factors.

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Barua and Das (1981) examined the role of family type on fertility performance among the Khasis of Meghalaya. Lakshmi and Bandyopadhyay (1986) studied the effect of occupation, education and economic status of 386 couples of Dehra Dun City. Their Results after analysis revealed that education up to graduate level for men and high school level for women is effective in increasing age at marriage which in turn reduces fertility. Husband's occupation and family income is also a determining factor for control of fertility. James (1999) made an attempt to describe the fertility decline in Andhra Pradesh to consider plausible explanations. He mentioned that the dramatic fertility decline in Andhra Pradesh state will follow Kerala and Tamil Nadu soon which had already attained a replacement level fertility.

Hussain and Bittles (2004) made an assessment of association between consanguinity and fertility in Asian populations by reviewing published literature and analyzing demographic and health survey (DHS) data from Pakistan and India. Results of the review of published literature showed higher fertility among women in the first-cousin unions compared to those married to non-relatives. In the DHS analyses, consanguinity was found to be associated with a number of direct and indirect determinants of fertility, including lower maternal education, lower maternal age at marriage, lower contraceptive use and rural residence.

Barua and Hazarika (2008) tried to trace the cause of abnormal high population growth prevailing among the inhabitants of Char areas of western and middle Assam (Barpeta, Nalbari and Jorhat). Their study revealed that literacy of mother distinctly reduces the risk of infant mortality in comparison to illiteracy. L. Khiloni (2009) studied fertility performance of the Anal women of Chandel District of Manipur with an aim to find out the factors that affect fertility and his study revealed that age at marriage, education and economic status have an impact on fertility.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the present study are

1. To see the fertility performance among the ever married Bengali Muslim women of reproductive age group.
2. To see the fertility performance with reference to some socio-economic factors such as age at marriage, type of marriage, education, occupation, family income and family type.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Present study deals with the effect of some socio-economic factors which are thought to have significant impact on the reproductive performance of Bengali Muslim women living in rural areas of Cachar District of Assam. Besides, Muslim community is seemed to have high fertility rate in the locality. So, it is an attempt to know the interaction of some socio-economic factors on the fertility performance at micro level.

#### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In the fertility performance of a woman biological factors play the key role but the effects of a variety of socio-cultural and psychological aspects need to be understood which can influence the levels of fertility in a society (Pakrasi, 1975; Rhodes, 1977). So an effort has been made to analyze and interpret some qualitative and quantitative data to understand the affect of some important socio-economic factors on the fertility performance of rural based Bengali Muslim women of Cachar district of Assam.

The study suffers certain limitations due to time restrictions. It may not be an extensive study due to problems which are beyond the researchers' control. Apart from that statistical analysis done for the data may suffer certain limitations.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The present study has been carried out among the Bengali Muslims of two villages namely Bhaurikandi Part-II of Sonai Block and Ganganagar Part-I of Palonghat Block of Cachar District of Assam. Cachar district is located in the southernmost part of Assam. The people inhabiting in the district are primarily known as Sylheti Bengali (a Bengali dialect). Linguistically the Bengali Muslims belong to the Indo-European ethnic group of Caucasoid racial stock (Basu et.al.2005). Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing practice among them. Consanguineous marriage is also present among them. They follow the patriarchal system of family structure and agriculture is their mainstay of livelihood.

The data have been collected by following household census method in the above mentioned two villages of Cachar District of Assam. Fertility performance has been recorded from 151 ever married Bengali Muslim women who have at least one live birth and belong to 15 to 49 years age group. Socio-economic data includes the relevant information such as name, age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, income, family size, family type, etc. All Statistical Analysis have been carried out by SPSS 16.0 version. ANOVA test have been performed and a p value of <0.05 has been considered as significance. Pearson's correlation coefficient was performed to see the association between fertility performance and some socio-economic factors.

Socio-economic factors such as age at marriage (marital age groups), educational status (different levels), occupational status (type of occupations), annual family income (categories) and family type have been considered as ordinal variable to perform ANOVA test. On the other hand age (in years), age at marriage (in years), family income (in thousands) and family size (number of person) have been taken into consideration as continuous variable to perform Pearson's correlation co-efficient. Whereas conception, live birth, still birth, induced abortion, spontaneous abortion and total reproductive wastage have been considered as continuous variable in both the statistical test.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study reveals that total number of pregnancies or conceptions of 151 ever married women is 661 out of which 633 are live births and 33 are reproductive wastages while 5 women are having twin births. The mean pregnancy of the Bengali Muslim women of the present study is 4.38 whereas average live birth and reproductive wastage are 4.19 and 0.22 respectively (Table-2). Average incidence of still birth (0.15) is higher than spontaneous abortion (0.06) but occurrence of induced abortion (0.01) is very less. As expected mean pregnancy and mean live birth show an increasing trend (Table-3) with the increase in age of the women except 15-19 age group. Statistical significant difference (ANOVA test) is found in conception (Sig.-0.000) and live birth (Sig.-0.000) among seven age groups of Bengali Muslim women.

**Table-1: Socio-Economic Background of the Bengali Muslim Women of Cachar District**

<b>Age Group of the Women</b>			
< 20 Years 4 (2.6)	20-29 Years 49 (32.5)	30-39 Years 53 (35.1)	40-49 Years 45 (29.8)
<b>Marital Status of the Women</b>			
Married 139 (92.1)	Widow 10 (6.6)	Divorcee 1 (1.3)	Total 151 (100.0)
<b>Age at Marriage of the Women</b>			
<18 Years 65 (43.0)	18-22 Years 67 (44.4)	23-27 Years 14 (9.3)	>27 Years 5 (3.3)
<b>Type of Marriage of Women</b>			
Unrelated 125 (82.8)	Consanguineous ১৪ (৯.২)		
<b>Educational Status of the Women</b>			
Illiterate 52 (34.4)	Literate to Primary Level 41 (27.2)	Middle to High School 54 (35.8)	Above Matriculation 4 (2.6)
<b>Educational Status of the Husband</b>			
Illiterate 19 (13.7)	Literate to Primary Level 46 (33.1)	Middle to High School 65 (46.8)	Above Matriculation 9 (6.5)
<b>Occupational Status of the Women</b>			
Non Working 144 (95.4)	Casual Worker 5 (3.3)	Service (Govt.) 2 (1.3)	
<b>Occupational Status of the Husband</b>			
Cultivation 39 (28.1)	Skill Work & Wage Labour 56 (40.3)	Business 33 (23.7)	Service 11 (7.9)
<b>Family Income (Annual)</b>			
< 61,000 74 (49.0)	61,000-1,20,999 44 (29.1)	1,21,000-1,80,999 21 (13.9)	= 1,81,000 12 (7.9)
<b>Family Type</b>			
Nuclear 100 (66.2)	Joint 44 (29.1)	Extended 7 (4.6)	
<b>Family Size</b>			
Small (1-4) 32 (21.2)	Medium (5-7) 76 (50.3)	Big (>7) 43 (28.5)	
In parentheses the figure shows percentage; Skill Work-Carpentry, Mason, etc.			

**Table-2: Fertility Performance among the Bengali Muslim women of Cachar District**

No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
151	Sum	661 <sup>5 Twin</sup>	633	23	1	9	33
	Min	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Max	11	11	2	1	4	4
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.22</b>
	SE	0.208	0.195	0.034	0.007	0.033	0.046

**Table-3: Fertility Performance according to Present Age of the women**

Age group	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
15-19	4	Sum	8	8	0	0	0	0
		Mean	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
20-24	16	Sum	31	30	1	0	0	1
		Mean	<b>1.94</b>	<b>1.88</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.06</b>
25-29	33	Sum	95	90	5	0	1	6
		Mean	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.18</b>
30-34	33	Sum	142	140	3	0	0	3
		Mean	<b>4.30</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.09</b>
35-39	20	Sum	103	99	2	1	2	5
		Mean	<b>5.15</b>	<b>4.95</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.25</b>
40-44	24	Sum	135	124	8	0	4	12
		Mean	<b>5.63</b>	<b>5.17</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.50</b>
45-49	21	Sum	147	142	4	0	2	6
		Mean	<b>7.00</b>	<b>6.76</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.29</b>
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	15.550	16.408	1.204	1.096	0.553	1.710
		Sig.	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	0.308	0.368	0.767	0.123

**Table-4: Fertility Performance according to Age at Marriage of the women**

Age at Marriage	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
<18 Years	65	Sum	316	297	14	0	9	23
		Mean	<b>4.86</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.35</b>
18-22 Years	67	Sum	292	286	7	0	0	7
		Mean	<b>4.36</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.10</b>
23-27 Years	14	Sum	45	42	2	1	0	3
		Mean	<b>3.21</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.21</b>
>27 Years	5	Sum	8	8	0	0	0	0
		Mean	<b>1.60</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	3.924	3.885	1.038	3.420	1.464	2.478
		Sig.	<b>0.010</b>	<b>0.010</b>	0.377	<b>0.019</b>	0.227	0.064

**FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND AGE AT MARRIAGE:**

It is seen that 43.0 percentages of women got married before the attainment of 18 years of age while 44.4 percentages of women got married between 18 to 22 years of age which may be one of the factors which influence fertility rate (Table-1). Earlier findings also indicate that Muslim women have been relatively less willing to adopt family planning measures and have a larger fertility period since they get married at younger age (Ahmed, 2003). As expected a prominent declining trend is noticed in mean



conception and mean live birth (Table-4) with the increase of age at marriage of women. A fluctuating trend is observed in pregnancy wastage with the increase of age at marriage of the women. Mean conception (4.86), live birth (4.57), still birth (0.22), spontaneous abortion (0.14) and total pregnancy wastage (0.35) are found to be high in those women who got married before 18 years. Single case of induced abortion is observed in 23-27 years marital age group. Statistically (ANOVA test) significant differences are observed in conception (Sig.-0.010) as well as in live birth (Sig.-0.010) and still birth (Sig.-0.019) among different categories of age at marriage.

#### FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND CONSANGUINITY:

It is found from the study that 17.2 percentages of marriages are consanguineous in nature (Table-1). Mean conception (4.85) and live birth (4.62) are higher in consanguineous marriages compared to non-consanguineous marriages (Table-5). Average incidence of induced abortion and total pregnancy wastage are found to be almost same in both the groups. It is noteworthy to mention here that incidence of still birth is more (mean-0.18) in non-consanguineous marriage but the occurrence of spontaneous abortion is high (mean-0.23) in consanguineous marriages. Nair (1997) mentioned about religious customs and marriage practices as some of the reasons behind the high Muslim birth rate. Still birth (Sig.-0.038) and spontaneous abortion (Sig.-0.017) show significant (ANOVA test) difference between unrelated and consanguineous marriage.

**Table-5: Fertility Performance according to Type of Marriage**

Type of Marriage	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
Unrelated	125	Sum	535	513	23	1	3	27
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.22</b>
Consanguineous	26	Sum	126	120	0	0	6	6
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>4.62</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.23</b>
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	1.055	0.982	4.384	0.207	5.824	0.015
		<b>Sig.</b>	0.306	0.323	<b>0.038</b>	0.650	<b>0.017</b>	0.904

#### FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND EDUCATION:

It is observed that education of the women have a significant impact on the fertility performance (Table-6). It is evident from the result that with the increase of educational status there is a prominent decline in reproductive performance which was also mentioned in earlier findings (Bhowmick et al., 1970). Although literate women are more (65.6%) compared to illiterates (41.88%) but only 2.6% of women studied beyond matriculation (Table-1). It is also important to mention about education of the husband because apart from education of the women, husband's education also plays a significant role on the fertility performance of women. It is found that majority of the husbands are either middle school pass or studied up to high school level (V-X: 46.8%). But a high percentage of husbands (Table-1) are either literate or studied up to primary school (L-IV: 33.1%). Mean conception (5.25), live birth (4.98) and reproductive wastage (0.33) are found to be very high among the illiterate women. Average incidence of induced abortion (0.02) and spontaneous abortion (0.13) are found to be high among illiterate women. Mean occurrence of still birth (0.20) is found to be more in literate to primary level educational status ANOVA tests reveal that there are statistical significant differences in conception (Sig.-0.000) and live birth (Sig.-0.000) among different educational categories of Bengali Muslim women.

**Table-6: Fertility Performance according to Educational Status of the women**

Educational Status	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
Illiterate	52	Sum	273	259	9	1	7	17
		Mean	5.25	4.98	0.17	0.02	0.13	0.33
L-IV	41	Sum	205	195	8	0	2	10
		Mean	5.00	4.76	.20	0.00	0.05	0.24
V-X	54	Sum	171	167	6	0	0	6
		Mean	3.17	3.09	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.11
X+	4	Sum	12	12	0	0	0	0
		Mean	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	8.304	7.672	0.548	0.630	1.030	1.535
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.650	0.597	0.381	0.208

L-IV: Literate to Primary Level; V-X: Middle to High school level; X+: Beyond Matriculation

**Table-7: Fertility Performance according to Occupational Status of the women**

Occupational Status	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
Non-Working	144	Sum	633	605	23	1	9	33
		Mean	4.40	4.20	0.16	0.01	0.06	0.23
Casual Worker	5	Sum	22	22	0	0	0	0
		Mean	4.40	4.40	.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Service (Govt.)	2	Sum	6	6	0	0	0	0
		Mean	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	0.291	0.265	0.498	0.024	0.079	0.547
		Sig.	0.748	0.767	0.609	0.976	0.924	0.580

**FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND OCCUPATION:**

It is revealed from the study that all most all the Bengali Muslim women are engaged in household activities (95.4%) while a few women are engaged (Table-1) in either small scale shopping/wage labour (3.3%) or government service (teacher at primary school-1.3%). Fertility performance is found to be very less among government service women (both TC & LB-3.00) compared to casual worker (both TC & LB-4.40) and women engaged in household activities (TC-4.40 & LB-4.20). But reproductive wastage (Table-7) is only visible among the non-working women (Mean-0.23). In societies where women are confined to household activities are considered suitable only for producing children which in turn related to their social status also Raj (2005). ANOVA test does not provide any statistical significant difference in reproductive performance among three occupational categories of Bengali Muslim women.

**Table-8: Fertility Performance according to Family Income**

Annual Family Income	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
= 60 T	74	Sum	307	294	12	1	3	16
		Mean	4.15	3.97	0.16	0.01	0.04	0.22
61 T-1.2 L	44	Sum	223	213	6	0	6	12
		Mean	5.07	4.84	0.14	0.00	0.14	0.27
=1. 21 L	33	Sum	131	126	5	0	0	5
		Mean	3.97	3.82	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.15
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	2.362	2.372	0.053	0.517	1.241	0.433
		Sig.	0.098	0.097	0.948	0.597	0.292	0.650

= 60 T = = 60999; 61 T-1.2 L =61000-120999, =1.21 L =121000 (in rupees)



### FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND FAMILY INCOME:

It is expected that with the increase of family income (Table-8) there will be a decline in fertility performance. But results do not show a clear trend in fertility performance of Bengali Muslim women with the increase of family income. Almost half of the women (49.0%) belong to those families where annual family income is less than 61,000 (Table-1). Mean pregnancy (3.97), live birth (3.82) and pregnancy wastage (0.15) are found to be least in highest income category ( 1.21 Lacs) compared to other two income categories ( 6 Thousands & 61 Thousands to 1.2 Lacs). It is noteworthy to give a background idea on occupation of husband as it has reflection on family income. Lakshmi and Bandyopadhyay (1986) mentioned that occupation of husband and its effect on fertility has been appreciable, although sometimes in combination with education and economic condition. It is found that most of the husbands of Bengali Muslim women are engaged in cultivation (28.1%) and skill work (carpentry, mason, etc) or wage labour (40.3%) which provides more income with the increase of manpower as one person can earn a minimal amount.

### FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND FAMILY TYPE:

It is found from the study most of the Bengali Muslims (Table-1) are living in nuclear families (66.2%). Mean conception (4.77), live birth (4.54), still birth (0.18), induced abortion (0.01), spontaneous abortion (0.07) and total reproductive wastage (0.26) are found to be much higher in nuclear families compared to joint families. Similar results were also observed by Deori and Barbhuiya (2011) and mentioned that in joint families with the presence of other family members there is lack of privacy and accommodation as well as the frequency of coitus is also low in joint families which influences the fertility rate. ANOVA tests reveal significant differences in pregnancy (Sig.-0.008) and live birth (Sig.-0.012) between nuclear and joint family type (Table-9).

**Table-9: Fertility Performance according to Family Type**

Family Type	No. of Women	Value	Total Conception	Live Birth	Still Birth	Induced Abortion	Spontaneous Abortion	Reproductive Wastage
Nuclear	100	Sum	477	454	18	1	7	26
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.26</b>
Joint	51	Sum	184	179	5	0	2	7
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.14</b>
ANOVA (d.f.-150)		F	7.263	6.485	1.338	0.508	0.195	1.604
		<b>Sig.</b>	<b>0.008</b>	<b>0.012</b>	0.249	0.477	0.659	0.207

### CORRELATION BETWEEN FERTILITY PERFORMANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES:

Pearson's correlation coefficient (Table-10) among the Bengali Muslim women discloses that total conception (-0.264 & -0.342) and live birth (-0.252 & -0.337) have significant (0.01 level) negative correlation with age at marriage (in years) and education (year of schooling). Pregnancy wastage also shows negative association with age at marriage (-0.176) and education (-0.152). Family income (annual-in thousands) shows a negligible positive correlation with conception (0.009) and live birth (0.010) and but the same shows low negative association with reproductive wastage (-0.021). It is observed that family size is having significant positive correlation with conception (0.340) and live birth (0.357) but low negative correlation with pregnancy wastage. It is important to mention that though most of Bengali Muslim women live in nuclear families (Table-1) but their families are medium (50.3%) to big (28.5%) in size. This gives an indication of the role of family type as well as family size on the reproductive performance. Education and other socio-economic factors such as age at marriage, occupation, income, family type, etc are playing a key role for such a high fertility rate of the population. Apart from these factors, influence of religious beliefs which is still observed in the society though in lesser degree bears a strong impact on their fertility performance. The role of socio-economic conditions rather than religious determinism had been pointed out by Jeffery and Jeffery (1997) for higher Muslim birthrates.

**Table-10: Correlation between Fertility Performance and some socio-economic factors**

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (No. of Women-151)	Age	Marriage Age	Edu- cation	Family Income	Family Size	Conce- ption	Live Birth	RW
Age (Years)	1	.124	-.286**	.139	-.026	.615**	.615**	.203*
Age at Marriage (Years)	.124	1	.164*	.184*	-.160	-.264**	-.252**	-.176*
Education (Year of Schooling)	-.286**	.164*	1	.244**	-.106	-.342**	-.337**	-.152
Annual Family Income (Thousands)	.139	.184*	.244**	1	.331**	.009	.010	-.021
Family Size (No. of Persons)	-.026	-.160	-.106	.331**	1	.340**	.357**	.068
Total Conception (No.)	.615**	-.264**	-.342**	.009	.340**	1	.976**	.432**
Live Birth (No.)	.615**	-.252**	-.337**	.010	.357**	.976**	1	.235**
Reproductive Wastage (RW-No.)	.203*	-.176*	-.152	-.021	.068	.432**	.235**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that mean pregnancy of the Bengali Muslim women of Cachar district of Assam is 4.63 while mean live birth and reproductive wastage are 4.19 and 0.22 respectively. They have got married at a much younger age resulting in longer fertility period and high fertility rate. Fertility rate is also high in consanguineous marriages. As most of the Bengali Muslim women are illiterates or less educated and they are mostly engaged in household activities which in turn influence their social status results a higher fertility rate. Although reproductive performance is low in highest family income category but it shows a negligible positive association with family income. Fertility rate is comparatively very low among the women who live in joint families. But the numbers of women living in nuclear and medium to big size families are more which have an impact on the family income. Most of the Bengali Muslim families are living in an overall poor socio-economic status which results a higher fertility rate. From the study it can be concluded age at marriage, marriage type, education, occupation, family income, family type, influence of religion, etc. are playing key role for a high rate of fertility rate among the Bengali Muslims.

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