



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POPULATION GROWTH AMONG HINDUS AND MUSLIMS IN INDIA

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260403018>

Abstract

The present study investigates, from a historical and sociocultural standpoint, the population growth trends of Muslims and Hindus in India. In order to investigate how demographic trends across India's two main religious communities have changed from the period of colonial rule to the present, the study uses a qualitative and historical research approach. The majority of the research is based on secondary sources, including reports from the Census of India, data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), academic books, research journals, and demographic studies. The investigation finds that, while Muslims experienced slightly higher population growth rates in specific decades after independence, fertility rates between the both Hindus and Muslims have steadily fallen over time. The findings also show that fertility behaviour has been influenced more by socioeconomic and educational variables than by religion alone. These factors include literacy, women's education, healthcare access, urbanisation, and family planning awareness. Demographic shifts in various regions were also influenced by historical events such as colonial census operations, the Partition of India, migration, and after independence development initiatives. The study comes to the conclusion that understanding India's religious demographic shift requires a non-communal, evidence-based, and balanced viewpoint that emphasises social development, healthcare, education, and general socioeconomic advancement.

Keywords: *Population Growth, Religious Demography, Hindus and Muslims, Socioeconomic Factors, Demographic Transition*

Introduction

India is one of the world's largest population and culturally varied countries, and religion has a huge impact on social structure, cultural identities, and demographic behaviour. The two biggest religious groupings in the nation are Muslims and Hindus. Muslims made up roughly 14.2% of the population of the country, while Hindus made up nearly 79.8%, according to the Government of India's 2011 Census Report. Historians, sociologists, demographers, and policymakers have long been interested in these demographic trends since population increase is intimately linked to social development, education, healthcare, migration, fertility, and economic situations.

Religious demography in India has its historical roots in colonial times, when systematic census procedures were implemented under British rule. India saw significant socioeconomic and political changes in addition to fast population increase following its independence in 1947. But Muslim and Hindu population growth rates and trends have not always been the same. Variations in demographic trends among groups and regions have been attributed to differences in literacy levels, women's education, healthcare access, urbanisation, job possibilities, and family planning awareness. Multiple demographic research studies have highlighted the fact that socioeconomic circumstances frequently have a greater impact on fertility behaviours than religion alone. According to recent Pew research Center data, reproduction rates in all major religious communities in India have consistently fallen over the previous few decades, yet comparative variations persist.

Religious communities in modern India often become both politically and socially sensitive while discussing population growth. As a result, an objective, historical, and qualitative understanding of the problem based on reliable data and academic interpretation is required. This study aims to investigate historical trends and sociocultural factors impacting population increase among Hindus and Muslims in India using a balanced research approach, without promoting any communal or ideological stance. The study attempts to create a comparative overview of demographic change and its wider consequences for Indian society by examining census data, official documents, and previously published academic research.

Historical Background of Population Growth in India

A variety of political, social, economic and cultural variables have affected India's population growth throughout history. Population development in ancient and mediaeval India was modest due to recurrent famines, pandemics, wars, and a lack of medical facilities. Traditional family structures and reliance on agriculture had a significant impact on population behaviour throughout this time. The introduction of regular census operations in the 19th century during British colonial authority marked the beginning of a more scientific understanding of India's population. The organised data on religion, caste, language, and regional distribution of population from the first synchronised Statistical Census of India, which was carried out in 1881, eventually became crucial sources for demographic research (Davis, 1951).

India's demographic development during the colonial period was irregular due to poverty, food shortages, illness incidents, and poor sanitary conditions. But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advancements in public administration, transportation, and healthcare services progressively lowered death rates. India experienced a period of fast population growth following its independence in 1947 as a result of improvements in healthcare, immunisation programs, food production, and falling death rates. Massive migration between India and Pakistan as a result of the Partition of India had a substantial impact on the demographic makeup of Muslims and Hindus in a number of areas. According to historical demographic research, India's population grew quickly starting in the middle of the 20th century, making it one of the most populous countries in the world (Davis, 1951).

Over time, there has been a progressive shift in the relative growth patterns of Muslims and Hindus. Although the fact that Hindus have always made up the majority in India, census data show that the Muslim population grew at comparatively faster rates in some decades following independence. All major religious communities have seen a steady fall in fertility rates in recent decades, according to current demographic statistics. The Pew Research Center has found that factors including women's education, urbanisation, growth in the economy, literacy, and accessibility to healthcare have all had a major role in reducing the fertility gap between Muslims and Hindus in India (Kramer, 2021). In a comparable manner, Stonawski et al., (2015) contended that among the most significant factors influencing demographic shift in India's religious communities are academic achievement and socioeconomic transition.

In modern India, the study of religious demography has grown in academic and policy importance since population trends have a direct impact on education, employment, healthcare, housing conditions, and social welfare. In order to comprehend more general trends of demographic transition, migration, modernisation, and societal transformation in Indian society, historical examination of population growth among Muslims and Hindus is helpful. To gain an impartial view of demographic patterns and prevent misconceptions about the rise of the religious community in India, a balanced historical approach grounded in evidence is important.

Review of Literature

Sotelo and Acharya, (2005) investigated the connection between population growth and religion in a few Indian states. The study examined variations in population growth rates between Muslims and Hindus using data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-I and II) and the Census of India. The researchers found that between 1981 and 1991 and 1991 and 2001, the Muslim population grew at a faster rate than the Hindu population. The study highlighted how reproduction behaviour and demographic development in India may be influenced by religious beliefs, cultural customs, and traditional values. It also made the case that religion can have a significant impact on population growth and fertility trends in many cultures.

Mainuddin, (2010) investigated the population increase, distribution, and educational level of Muslims in West Bengal, discovering that the Muslim community is unevenly dispersed among districts and remains largely rural in nature. According to the survey, Muslims in West Bengal and India have much lower levels of literacy and educational achievement. It also highlighted the connection between distribution of population and socioeconomic conditions by showing that areas with a higher proportion of Muslims typically had lower levels of educational accomplishment.

Bhagat, (2015) investigated the population growth histories of Hindus and Muslims in India and discovered that, while Muslim fertility rates have always been greater than those of Hindus, both communities have shown a continuous drop in fertility over time. According to the study, socioeconomic factors including accessibility to healthcare, education, and demographic shifts have a big impact on population growth. It also dispelled the myth that Muslims would eventually surpass Hindus in India and emphasised regional differences among Muslims.

Pasupleti et al., (2016) used a cohort technique based on data from the National Family Health Surveys to investigate the fertility disparities between Muslims and Hindus in India. The study showed that Muslim women had greater fertility rates than Hindu women across all reproductive generations. It also showed that Muslim inclinations for larger families contributed to the fertility gap, with socioeconomic and demographic factors accounting for a considerable share of the disparity. They stressed that both social circumstances and reproductive behaviour had an impact on the fertility difference between the two tribes.

Ghosh, (2018) used Census 2011 data to investigate fertility disparities between Muslims and Hindus in India's major states. The study used the relational Gompertz model and the Arriaga variation of the P/F ratio approach to determine the Total Fertility Rate (TFR). The Arriaga approach was used to assess fertility differences in 422 districts among 13 Indian states since the results showed that it gave estimates more compatible with the Sample Registration System (SRS) data. The study found that during the past ten years, both Muslim and Hindu fertility rates have steadily decreased, suggesting that India is still undergoing a

reproductive shift. Significant regional differences still exist in many regions of the nation, despite the fact that the fertility gap between the two communities has significantly decreased.

Critical Analysis of Existing Literature and Research Gap

According to the reviewed literature, a number of academics have looked at population growth and fertility trends among Muslims and Hindus in India from regional, socioeconomic status, and demographic angles. Fertility disparities, demographic transition, and the impact of socioeconomic determinants on population growth were the primary subjects of studies by Sotelo and Acharya (2005), Bhagat (2015), Pasupuleti et al. (2016), and Ghosh (2018). All of these research show that women's status, urbanisation, healthcare availability, education, and economic circumstances have a major impact on fertility behaviour in religious societies. In the same way, Mainuddin (2010) emphasised the connection between Muslim educational backwardness and population distribution, particularly in West Bengal.

The majority of present studies are mostly quantitative in nature and focus on fertility rates, census-based estimation techniques, and demographic models, considering the fact that they offer insightful statistical and demographic information. Few research have tried to evaluate the problem from both a qualitative and historical perspective. Furthermore, less focus has been placed on comprehending how historical occurrences, sociocultural circumstances, migration, minority status, and educational disparities have influenced the patterns of population increase among Muslims and Hindus throughout time. In order to fill this research gap, the current study looks at population growth trends and their wider societal ramifications in India using a comparative, historical, and qualitative methodology.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study is to investigate the historical and sociocultural aspects of the population growth of Muslims and Hindus in India.

1. To examine the historical patterns of Hindu and Muslim population growth in India.
2. To compare Muslim and Hindu fertility and demographic trends throughout different time periods and geographical areas.
3. To examine how educational and socioeconomic variables affect population growth in the two communities.
4. To understand the wider societal ramifications of the shift in religion demographics in modern Indian society.

Research Questions

The study aims to investigate the following research questions concerning the population increase of Muslims and Hindus in India.

1. What are the main historical patterns of Muslim and Hindu population increase in India?
2. How do socio-economic and educational factors influence demographic differences between Hindus and Muslims?
3. What are the major social implications of changing religious demographic patterns in contemporary India?

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of the present study is predicated on the knowledge that a range of historical, socioeconomic, educational, cultural, and demographic factors influence the population growth of Muslims and Hindus in India. The study makes the assumption that a variety of interrelated factors, including literacy, women's education, healthcare access, urbanisation, economic conditions, migration, the planning of families awareness, and social status, influence population change rather than just religion. Within many religious communities, these variables affect mortality trends, fertility habits, and demographic shifts. The framework also acknowledges the significance of historical occurrences that shaped Hindu and Muslim demographic trends, including colonial census operations, India's partition, modernisation, and post-independence development programs. Minority experiences, regional variations, and sociocultural customs are thought to be significant factors influencing population behaviour and reproductive choices. In order to examine how these interrelated factors have influenced the differences in population growth between the two communities throughout time, the study takes a comparative and historical approach.

The study also makes the assumption that changes in the population will have wider effects on social welfare, employment, healthcare, education, and social harmony in modern Indian society. The conceptual framework offers a fair and fact-based view of religious population shift in India by linking historical patterns with contemporary socioeconomic realities.

Methodology of the Study

The present research investigation compares the population growth patterns of Muslims and Hindus in India using a qualitative and historical research technique. In order to comprehend past demographic trends and the sociocultural elements driving population growth in the two communities, the study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. Since the study focuses on the interpretation, comparison, and critical analysis of historical and demographic information, rather than statistical experiments or field-based survey procedures, a qualitative approach has been selected.

The evolution of population trends from the period of colonialism to modern India has been examined using the historical method. The study looks at how demographic shifts among Hindus and Muslims have been impacted throughout time by historical occurrences such British census operations, the Partition of India, socioeconomic transition, urbanisation, educational advancement, and governmental policy. This approach aids in comprehending the persistence and evolution of religious demographic trends within India's larger social and historical framework.

The majority of information included in the study came from secondary sources. Reports from the Census of India, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), books, scholarly articles, and research journals have all provided pertinent information. The approach has also been supported by a critical evaluation of previously published literature on fertility, population growth, religion, education, and demographic change.

The study applied comparative analysis and qualitative content analysis techniques for data analysis. In order to find significant patterns, similarities, differences, and influencing variables associated to population increase among Muslims and Hindus, historical records, demographic reports, and scholarly findings have been methodically interpreted. The study analyses demographic trends while taking educational and socioeconomic factors into account.

Only reliable and reputable academic sources have been used in the study to ensure authenticity and dependability. Priority has been given throughout data gathering and interpretation to government documents, peer-reviewed research articles, and reputable demographic studies. The study aims to provide a fair and impartial examination without endorsing any political, ideological, or social stance.

Comparative Historical Analysis of Population Growth among Hindus and Muslims

The comparative historical analysis of population growth of Hindus and Muslims in India serves in comprehending the two communities' shifting demographic patterns over time. It also describes how Indian society's population growth and fertility patterns have been impacted by historical occurrences, socioeconomic circumstances, education, healthcare, and modernisation.

Population Growth during the Colonial Period: Poverty, starvation, epidemics, wars, and inadequate healthcare facilities all had an impact on Hindu and Muslim population growth throughout the period of colonial rule. In the 19th century, both settlements faced limited demographic expansion due to high mortality rates. The establishment of systematic census operations under British control, particularly beginning in 1881, gave organised demographic data on India's religious makeup and population distribution. Later on, these census data became crucial resources for comprehending comparative religious demography.

Population Growth after Independence: India's population grew quickly after gaining independence in 1947 as a result of advancements in public health, food production, sanitation, and medical facilities. The populations of Muslims and Hindus both grew significantly during this time. However, demographic research shows that in several post-independence decades, the Muslim population grew at somewhat faster rates. Through migration and resettlement, historical occurrences like the Partition of India also had an impact on the demographic makeup of various regions.

Fertility Trends among Hindus and Muslims: Fertility rates among Muslims and Hindus have steadily decreased over time, according to a comparative study of fertility trends. In several regions of India, Muslim fertility rates used to be comparatively higher than Hindu fertility rates. The fertility difference between the two communities has, however, been gradually closing, according to recent demographic research. This demographic shift has been greatly influenced by factors including women's education, literacy, availability of healthcare, urbanisation, and family planning knowledge.

Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Population Growth: Hindu and Muslim population growth has been heavily impacted by socioeconomic factors rather than just religion. Fertility behavioural patterns and demographic change are significantly influenced by factors such as living conditions, healthcare facilities, career possibilities, educational attainment, and income level. Research has indicated that areas with greater socioeconomic development and literacy rates typically have lower rates of both community fertility.

Regional Variations in Demographic Patterns: The population growth patterns of Muslims and Hindus in India show notable regional differences. Fertility rates have declined more quickly in states with stronger urbanisation, healthcare, and educational systems. On the other hand, areas with poorer economies and lower levels of education continue to have comparatively faster population growth. These regional variations show a strong correlation between local socioeconomic conditions and population behaviour.

Demographic Transition and Social Change: According to the comparative historical research, all of India's major religious communities are being impacted by a larger demographic transformation. Both Muslims and Hindus have changed their reproductive habits as a result of modernisation, educational progress, economic growth, and government welfare initiatives. As a result, the two communities' demographic disparities are progressively narrowing, reflecting broader socioeconomic change in Indian society.

Socio-Cultural and Historical Factors Influencing Population Growth

A number of historical, sociocultural, educational, and economic reasons have contributed to the population rise of Muslims and Hindus in India. Fertility trends are strongly correlated with literacy, women's education, access to healthcare, urbanisation, and economic situations rather than religion alone. While increased knowledge of family planning and reproductive health helps to stabilise the population, communities with lower levels of educational attainment and less healthcare facilities frequently have relatively higher fertility rates.

Historical advancements have also had a significant impact on India's population patterns. During British colonial control, systematic records of religious population distribution were established with the introduction of census operations. Subsequently, the 1947 Indian Partition led to widespread movement between India and Pakistan, which profoundly altered the demographic

makeup of several areas. Hindu and Muslim population growth trends were further impacted by post-independence modernisation, the expansion of healthcare services, and government social programs.

In Indian society, reproductive behaviour has been equally impacted by sociocultural norms and shifting social norms. In many civilisations, earlier customs like early marriage and a tendency for larger families led to greater fertility rates. However, these conventional beliefs have increasingly shifted due to modernisation, women's empowerment, urban lives, and expanding educational opportunities. Because of this, fertility rates among Muslims and Hindus have been progressively declining in recent decades, which is indicative of India's larger demographic and social transition.

Major Findings and Discussions

The present investigation shows that historical, social, educational, and demographic factors—rather than only religion—have influenced the population growth trends of Muslims and Hindus in India. Both communities had substantial population expansion following independence, according to historical study, as a result of advancements in healthcare facilities, decreased death rates, improved sanitation, and higher food production. Recent demographic trends show that fertility rates among Muslims and Hindus have gradually decreased over time, despite the fact that the Muslim population saw relatively larger growth rates in several decades. This finding is consistent with the larger demographic shift occurring in Indian society.

The study also reveals that socioeconomic development and educational achievement have a significant impact on population growth and fertility behaviour. Lower fertility rates and smaller family size preferences are typically found in communities with higher levels of literacy, particularly among women, increased urbanisation, and improved access to healthcare services. However, areas with poorer economies and less access to education continue to see comparatively faster population increase. Therefore, the study backs up the claim stated by a number of demographic analysts that socioeconomic circumstances have a greater impact on reproductive behaviours than religious identity.

The study also revealed that there are significant geographical differences in the demographic trends of Muslims and Hindus in India. Fertility rates have declined more quickly in states with better infrastructure for healthcare, education, and urbanisation. On the other hand, fertility rates are still relatively higher in rural and economically deprived areas. These regional variations show how population behaviour and demographic change are tightly linked to local social and economic situations.

The study also emphasises how historical occurrences and social elements have an impact on India's religious demography. The distribution of populations and demographic trends have changed as a result of colonial census operations, the Partition of India, migration, modernisation, and evolving family patterns. Higher fertility rates were caused by traditional customs like early marriage and a predilection for larger families, but these views have gradually changed in both cultures as a result of modernisation, women's empowerment, and expanding educational possibilities.

The findings also imply that in recent decades, the fertility gap between Muslims and Hindus has been progressively closing. This drop has been largely attributed to increased family planning awareness, the development of reproductive healthcare services, higher educational expectations, and shifting economic situations. As a result, the study dispels the myth that religious differences are the only factor influencing population increase and instead highlights the significance of socioeconomic advancement, healthcare, and education in comprehending demographic change.

Therefore, the discussion suggests that a more comprehensive framework of social transformation, modernisation, and developmental change should be used to analyse India's religious demographic shift. The study comes to the conclusion that in order to evaluate population trends objectively and to prevent communal or politically influenced interpretations of demographic concerns in India, a balanced and reliable evidence-based approach is required.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The present study comes to the conclusion that historical, socioeconomic, educational, cultural, and demographic factors—rather than just religion—have influenced the population growth trends of Muslims and Hindus in India. Demographic trends in the nation have been greatly impacted by historical events like colonial census operations, the Partition of India, migration, modernisation, and post-independence social programs. The study also shows that advancements in women's education, healthcare facilities, urbanisation, literacy, and family planning awareness have all contributed to a steady reduction in fertility rates over the past few decades in both communities. The fertility gap between Muslims and Hindus has increasingly decreased, although certain variations in population growth rates still existing. This is indicative of the larger process of demographic transition and social reform in Indian society. As a result, the study emphasises how crucial it is to analyse religious demographic shifts in India using a non-communal, evidence-based, and balanced methodology.

The study suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on educational development, women's empowerment, healthcare accessibility, and socioeconomic upliftment to ensure balanced population stabilization across all communities. Social welfare programs and government policies should pay special attention to areas with lower fertility rates that are economically and educationally disadvantaged. It is important to raise public understanding of family planning, women's education, and reproductive health without respect to political or religious beliefs. Furthermore, using more interdisciplinary and qualitative methods, future studies may examine regional demographic differences, migration trends, minority experiences, and the influence of modernisation on population behaviour. Such initiatives would help us comprehend religious demography and social transformation in modern India more thoroughly.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution: Samir Jana: Data Collection, Literature Review, Drafting, Methodology, Analysis, Referencing, Drafting

Funding: No

Declaration: The author has given consent for the publication.

Competing Interest: No

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