

Review Article

Review Based Study on Declining Child Sex Ratio in India – A Matter of Great Concern.

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Abstract: Sex ratio at birth is defined as the number of female births per 1000 male birth. Declining Child Sex Ratio causes imbalances in child population and expected to have serious socio-demographic consequences, further reinforcing the subordination of girls and women. The issue, therefore, requires a multi-faceted response to enhance the value of girls by change in negative perceptions on girl child as well as legal measures to curb misuse of medical technology.

Keywords: Child Sex Ratio, Socio-demographic Consequences.

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INTRODUCTION

The Child Sex Ratio (number of female children per 1000 male children in the age group of 0-6 years) attempts to bring out the recent changes in our society in its attitudes and outlook towards the girl child. A balanced Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is necessary for smooth continuation of any society, while, an imbalance in child sex ratio leads to severe socio-economic, demographic and cultural consequences in the society. The declining juvenile sex ratio is indicative of marginalization of girl children. In India to honor the girl children, every year 'January 24' is observed as the 'National Girl Child day'. Unfortunately, the girl child is having most burdens in Indian society looking after younger sibling, doing household chores, and neglected in many ways than boys in several parts of India, especially in downtrodden sections. The sharp decline in child sex ratio is a severe problem in many parts of country since 1950. It is quietly witnessed in 2011 census as well. This steep decline in child sex ratio is dangerous sign of the girl child deficit. Further, it has shown an alarming signs of gender inequality in child population.

Highlights of 2011 Census

The rapid decrease in child sex ratio that came as a shocker in the latest census figures shows 914 girls, and this is the lowest ever since Independence, slipping

from 927 in 2001. The increasing trend has been seen in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, while in all, the remaining 27 states and Union Territories, the rate has shown a decline. It was the highest in Mizoram at 971, closely followed by Meghalaya (970), while at the rock bottom was Haryana with 800 and Punjab with 846. At the district level, Lahul and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh had the highest child sex ratio at 1,013, while in Twang district of Arunachal Pradesh, it was 1,005. It was shamefully low in Jhajjar and Mahendragarh of Haryana at 774 and 778 respectively.

Trends of Child Sex Ratio

The child sex ratio is a sensitive indicator that displays the status of girl child. The study of trends in Child Sex Ratio (CSR) will reveal the intensity of changes in it, over a period of time. Here, overall Sex Ratios (OSR) of India are taken to know the gravity change in sex ratios. The child sex ratio has been declining faster than over all sex ratio. The Child ratio was 983 in 1951, declined to 976 in 1961, 964 in 1971, and 962 in 1981. It further dropped to 945 in 1991, 927 in 2001 and came down to 914 in 2011, while, the corresponding figures for overall sex ratios were 946, 941, 930, 934, 927, 933 and 940 respectively. Thus, in

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recent decades, the child sex ratio has drastically declined. It recorded highest fall, dropping 18 points from 945 to 927. Moreover, in 2011, the child sex ratio (914) was lower than overall sex ratio (940), which reveals the severity of the problem.

Child Sex Ratio by Residence

It is one of the important indicators of health status and equity between sexes in society. With better technology being available for selective sex abortions, India's case of 'missing girls' is far more glaring in urban India than in rural areas. The child sex ratio, which is otherwise an issue throughout the country, is even lower in urban areas than rural areas.

Table 1: Child Sex Ratio (CSR) of India by Residence

Child Sex Ratio by Residence	Census Year					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	976	964	962	945	927	914
Rural	957	968	963	948	934	919
Urban	951	948	959	935	906	902
Rural-Urban Gap	6	20	4	13	28	17

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table-1 shows that in 1961 census, the child sex ratio at the National was 976; whereas the rural child sex ratio stands at 957 and urban child sex ratio was 951. The corresponding figures in 2011 census are 914, 919 and 902 respectively. Further, the gap in rural-urban child sex ratio was 6 points in 1961, rose to 17 in 2011.

Child Sex Ratio in India (2001-2011)

The child sex ratio is generally affected by two factors namely mortality differentials under 6 years and extent of medical interferences, which influence overall sex ratio of an area or country. Data on ten bottom states/U.Ts with child sex ratio reveals enormity of

problem at macro level, which is useful for sub-planners to deal with the issue. Table-2 shows that in 2001 census, among the ten worst child sex ratio states, two economically progressed states namely Punjab and Haryana, ranks first and second respectively followed by Chandigarh and Delhi. The other six states were Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. While in 2011 census, Haryana and Punjab are the worst with least CSR followed by Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttaranchal, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh in bottom ten states. The other two are UTs, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Table-2: Child Sex Ratio in India (2001-2011)

S. No	State / UTs	Child Sex Ratio (2011)	
		2001	2011
1	Jammu and Kashmir	927	919
2	Himachal Pradesh	941	862
3	Punjab	896	909
4	Chandigarh	845	880
5	Uttarakhand	908	890
6	Haryana	819	834
7	NCT of Delhi	868	871
8	Rajasthan	909	888
9	Uttar Pradesh	916	902
10	Bihar	942	935
11	Sikkim	963	957
12	Arunachal Pradesh	964	972
13	Nagaland	964	943
14	Manipur	957	936
15	Mizoram	964	970
16	Tripura	966	957
17	Meghalaya	973	970
18	Assam	965	962
19	West Bengal	960	956
20	Jharkhand	965	948
21	Odisha	953	941
22	Chhattisgarh	975	969
23	Madhya Pradesh	932	918
24	Gujarat	883	890

S. No	State / UTs	Child Sex Ratio (2011)	
		2001	2011
25	Daman & Diu	926	904
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	979	926
27	Maharashtra	913	894
28	Andhra Pradesh	961	939
29	Karnataka	946	948
30	Goa	938	942
31	Lakshadweep	959	911
32	Kerala	960	964
33	Tamil Nadu	942	943
34	Puduchery	967	967
35	Andaman & Nicobar Island	957	968

Source: Census of India 2011.

Bottom Ten Districts

It is one of the important indicators of health status and equity between sexes in society. Data on the

districts which recorded lowest child sex ratio highlights the pattern of spatial disparities.

Table 3: Bottom ten districts by Child Sex Ratio India, 2001 and 2011

S. No	Census Year, 2001			Census Year, 2011		
	District	State	CSR	District	State	CSR
1	Fatehgarh Sahib	Punjab	766	Jhajjar	Haryana	774
2	Patiala	Punjab	777	Mahendragarh	Haryana	778
3	Manasa	Punjab	782	Rewari	Haryana	784
4	Bathinda	Punjab	785	Samba	Jammu & Kashmir	787
5	Kapurthala	Punjab	785	Sonipat	Haryana	790
6	Sangur	Punjab	786	Jammu	Jammu & Kashmir	794
7	Gurudaspur	Punjab	789	Bid	Maharashtra	800
8	Kurukshetra	Haryana	771	Ambala	Haryana	806
9	Ambala	Haryana	782	Rohtak	Haryana	807
10	Sonipat	Haryana	788	Pithoragarh	Uttarakhand	812

Source: Census of India 2011

Table-3 shows that the ‘Top of the Pops’, known as, the districts with the worst child sex ratio were, all in Punjab and Haryana, ironically in two of India’s wealthiest States in 2001; The worst of these ten was in Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab with a child sex ratio of just 766. All the districts of two states are covered in the range of 766 to 788. The other eight districts were Kurukshetra and Ambala in Haryana and Patiala, Mansa, Kapurthala, Bathinda, Gurudaspur and Sangur in Punjab. While in 2011, four states namely Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand come under this category. The bottom ten districts with lowest child sex ratio are Jhajjar, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Ambala, Rohtak in Haryana, Samba in Jammu & Kashmir, Bid in Maharashtra and Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand. These Tables show a heavy loss of female child, cautioning the status of girl child in two states.

Sample survey of births and deaths known as Sample Registration System (SRS) is being carried out on continuous basis by the Office of the Registrar

General, India in randomly selected villages and urban blocks spread throughout the country. The main objective of the survey is to provide annual reliable estimates of infant mortality, birth and death rates at the state and national levels. The Sex ratio at birth is defined as the number of female births per 1000 male birth. The estimates of Sex ratio at birth under SRS are derived by pooling the data for three years on moving average basis. The data on Sex ratio at birth (female per 1000 male) in urban regions, India and bigger States / UTs, 2013-15 to 2017-19 is at **Table-4**. As per the latest 5th report of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21) of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare the sex ratio of total population (females per 1000 males) is 1020 for the country as a whole, with sex ratio rural at 1037 and sex ratio urban at 985 [12]. The Government of India has enacted a comprehensive legislation, the Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PC & PNDT) Act in 1994, for prohibition of sex selection, before and after conception and for regulation of prenatal diagnostic techniques.

Table 4: Sex Ratio at birth (female per 1000 male) by residence, India and bigger States / UTs, 2013-15 to 2017-19

India and bigger states / UTs	Total					Rural					Urban				
	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19	2012-14	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2017-19	2012-14	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2017-19
India	900	898	896	899	904	903	902	898	900	904	890	888	890	897	906
Andhra Pradesh	918	913	916	920	931	933	923	928	930	938	885	888	885	898	917
Assam	900	896	915	925	928	902	898	918	927	929	876	880	891	905	918
Bihar	916	908	900	895	894	921	912	904	896	893	870	871	865	883	902
Chhattisgarh	961	963	961	958	956	987	995	985	976	972	839	833	862	881	891
Delhi	869	857	850	844	865	909	917	926	960	953	866	856	848	841	862
Gujarat	854	848	855	866	870	871	867	865	866	863	826	820	838	865	881
Haryana	831	832	833	843	865	836	835	828	840	862	821	824	844	847	871
Himachal Pradesh	924	917	918	930	949	929	921	920	932	951	844	852	878	891	902
Jammu & Kashmir	899	906	917	927	918	895	903	919	930	920	915	919	910	917	915
Jharkhand	902	918	916	923	916	914	927	927	932	920	852	882	876	888	902
Karnataka	939	935	929	924	915	967	965	958	949	941	887	883	879	881	873
Kerala	967	959	948	957	968	978	972	965	967	980	950	946	931	947	955
Madhya Pradesh	919	922	916	925	927	911	913	908	914	915	954	957	950	968	973
Maharashtra	878	876	881	880	881	871	872	886	878	884	890	882	875	881	877
Odisha	950	948	938	933	931	961	959	946	940	935	869	871	881	891	907
Punjab	889	893	886	890	891	869	876	874	878	874	924	921	905	908	918
Rajasthan	861	857	856	871	879	867	862	858	874	882	840	838	851	860	869
Tamil Nadu	911	915	907	908	915	920	926	919	913	913	901	903	896	903	918
Telangana	*	901	897	901	899	*	940	922	918	912	*	841	859	875	879
Uttar Pradesh	879	882	878	880	894	869	871	862	865	881	923	923	938	934	943
Uttarakhand	844	850	841	840	848	850	857	849	851	862	828	832	816	810	812
West Bengal	951	937	939	941	944	953	938	943	947	948	944	932	925	923	928

* Included in Andhra Pradesh

CAUSES FOR DECLINING CHILD SEX RATIO

- Sex Selective Abortions:** Between 1980 and 2010, it was estimated that 4 to 12 million girls were aborted because of their sex. It is estimated that illegal gender-selective abortions number 500,000 annually in India [1]. Thus, access to ultrasound is fairly widespread, which causes prenatal sex determination through Ultrasound technique, followed by induced abortion of female foetuses [6].
- Sex Ratio at Birth:** Worldwide, the normal Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is about 105 male babies per 100 female babies. However, India measures the SRB in reverse of the usual standard, i.e. female births per 1,000 male births, making 950 a normal SRB in India. It is declining due to sex elective pre-birth interventions [2].
- Infanticide, Abuse and Neglect of Girl Children:** A sex ratio less than the normal range of 943-980 girls per 1,000 boys, suggests discrimination against girls, and the presence of female infanticide, which is the killing of girls after birth, or of female foeticide, sex-selective abortion of the foetus [4].
- Missing Girl Children:** Anirudha Dutta in his article cited the estimations of renowned Economist Amartya Sen that 41.6 million girls had vanished in India in 1990 [1].
- Son Preference:** In agrarian societies, sons are desirable as hands to work the field, and small towns value sons as an asset in the fight against the "encroaching urban society. In addition, many couples depend on a son to care for them in their old age and assist in the financial stability of the family [9].
- Sex Differentials in Child Mortality (0-6 Years):** In the country as a whole, female child mortality is 40 percent higher than male child mortality. The sex differentials in infant and child mortality suggest that there is strong son preference and discrimination against female children [3].
- Under Reporting of Females:** In general, in some parts of country females are discriminated with socio-cultural and considered as secondary citizens, their status is lower than males, it causing to under reporting of females at the time of population enumerations [3,7].

8. **Son Preference and Male Bias:** Old cultural views and traditions are still strong in many parts of the country, where a girl means both a financial imposition on the family (in terms of a dowry), and the loss of a family heir. In addition, many couples depend on a son to care for them in their old age and assist in the financial stability of the family [9].

CONSEQUENCES

1. In the long run, the girl would be more in demand than boys. The girl could insist that the boy's family incur the cost of wedding.
2. There would also be more inter-caste, inter region and inter-religion marriages which again would be creating many socio-cultural and other problems.
3. The age gap between bride and bridegroom may increase.
4. Some boys remain unmarried due shortage of girls in their caste/clan.
5. The boys of one region, where the gender ratio is more skewed will marry other region girls; the choice rest with the girls.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY MEASURES

1. Perception change among the public on values of daughters as equal to sons.
2. Explaining severe consequences of girl child deficit.
3. Old Security for poorer sections.
4. Strict execution of Pre-Natal Determination Test (PNDT) Act.
5. Provision for better education for Girl Children.
6. Involving religious leaders for describing the value of girl child, because they can influence many aspects of public including population matters.
7. Performing some religious rituals by girls.
8. Discrimination against girl should be avoided by parents.

RELIGION WISE SEX RATIO

A recent study has reported that 'son bias' is on a decline in India as Sex Ratio at Birth normalised from 111 boys per 100 girls in 2011 to 108 boys per 100 girls in 2019-21 [11].

National Figures

1. The average annual number of baby girls "missing" in India fell from about 4.8 lakh in 2010 to 4.1 lakh in 2019. The "missing" here refers to how many more female births would have occurred during this time if there were no female selective abortions.
2. From 111 boys per 100 girls in India's 2011 census, the sex ratio at birth have normalised slightly, narrowing to about 109 in the 2015-16 wave of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and to 108 boys in the NFHS 5 2019-21.

3. Between 2000-2019, nine crore female births went "missing" because of female-selective abortions.

The report has also analysed religion-wise sex selection, pointing out that the gap was the highest for Sikhs [11].

- i. In the 2001 census, Sikhs had a sex ratio at birth of 130 males per 100 females, far exceeding that year's national average of 110.
- ii. By the 2011 census, the Sikh ratio had narrowed to 121 boys per 100 girls.
- iii. It now hovers around 110, about the same as the ratio of males to females at birth among the country's Hindu majority (109), according to the latest NFHS.

Both Chirstians (105 boys to 100 girls) and Muslims (106 boys to 100 girls) have sex ratios close to the natural norm [11].

Religion wise share in Missing Girls [11]

Share in Indian Population

- i.Sikh: 2%
- ii.Hindu: 80%
- iii.Muslim: 14%
- iv.Christian: 2.3%

Share in Missing Girls due to Sex Selective Abortion

- i.Sikh: 5%
- ii.Hindu: 87%
- iii.Muslim: 7%
- iv.Christian: 0.6%

Child Sex Ratio in Doda District of Jammu and Kashmir

In census enumeration, data regarding child under 0-6 age were also collected for all districts including Doda. There were total 71,240 children under age of 0-6 against 71,240 of 2001 census. Of total 71,240 male and female were 36,862 and 34,378 respectively. Child Sex Ratio as per census 2011 was 933 compared to 933 of census 2001. In 2011, Children under 0-6 formed 17.38 percent of Doda District compared to 22.24 percent of 2001. There was net change of -4.86 percent in this compared to previous census of India.

Out of the total Doda population for 2011 census, 7.97 percent lives in urban regions of district. In total 32,689 people lives in urban areas of which males are 18,211 and females are 14,478. Sex Ratio in urban region of Doda district is 795 as per 2011 census data. Similarly child sex ratio in Doda district was 831 in 2011 census. Child population (0-6) in urban region was 4,033 of which males and females were 2,203 and 1,830. This child population figure of Doda district is 12.10% of total urban population. Average literacy rate in Doda district as per census 2011 is 85.61% of which males and females are 92.46% and 76.94% literates respectively. In actual number 24,533 people are literate in urban region of

which males and females are 14,801 and 9,732 respectively.

As per 2011 census, 92.03% population of Doda districts lives in rural areas of villages. The total Doda district population living in rural areas is 377,247 of which males and females are 195,430 and 181,817 respectively. In rural areas of Doda district, sex ratio is 930 females per 1000 males. If child sex ratio data of Doda district is considered, figure is 939 girls per 1000 boys. Child population in the age 0-6 is 67,207 in rural areas of which males were 34,659 and females were 32,548. The child population comprises 17.73% of total rural population of Doda district. Literacy rate in rural areas of Doda district is 62.75% as per census data 2011. Gender wise, male and female literacy stood at 77.02 and 47.38 percent respectively. In total, 194,550 people were literate of which males and females were 123,819 and 70,731 respectively.

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