

Declining Sex Ratio in Rajasthan: An Analytical Overview of The Issue

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Abstract

In India sex ratio is calculated as number of female per 1000 males. sex ratio is continued decline till 1941. There has improvement of 10 points in sex ratio in 2011 census as compared to 2001 census. As per the census 2011 the sex ratio in India is 943 per 1000 males which was 933 in the previous census 2001. The recent provisional census figures for Rajasthan show an alarming drop in sex ratio of population, the number of women per 1000 men from 909 in 2001 to 883 in 2011. While in 1991 it was 916, a fall of 7 points (0.76%) in previous decade and a decline of 26 points (2.86%) in 2001-2011.

Keywords: Sex ratio, Decline, Education, Society, Awareness, Values, Technologies, Importance, Census, Community.

Introduction

In India sex ratio is the ratio of males to females in population. As per the census 2011 the sex ratio in India is 943 per 1000 males which was 933 in the previous census 2001. The recent provisional census figures for Rajasthan show an alarming drop in sex ratio of population, the number of women per 1000 men from 909 in 2001 to 883 in 2011. While in 1991 it was 916, a fall of 7 points (0.76%) in previous decade and a decline of 26 points (2.86%) in 2001-2011. Taking gender balance in industrialized countries as his point of Amartya Sen (1990) has found the evidence of female deficit in Asia and Africa. He concludes that about 11% of women are missing in these both continents. While Ansley Coale (1991) offered a lower estimate of global deficit, suggesting that the total number of missing females is about 60 million and nearly half of this deficit is from China (29.1 million) and India (22.8 million).

Objectives

1. To find out reasons of preference of male child.
2. To enlist organisation for a genetic counselling centre/ genetic clinics/ ultrasound clinics.
3. To assess impact of adverse sex ratio on socio-cultural conditions of community.

To highlight the consequences of declining sex ratio.

Review of literature

1. Status of women in India

An interstate comparison July 2000. The Indian journal of social work - Tkanitkar M. Mistry (Article) using the 1992-93 national indicators which reflect the status of women in India was undertaken.

2. Gender disparity in literacy

District level evidence from selected states of India. Jan. 2016. Educational quest – An international journal of education and applied social sciences. Narender Kumar, Naresh Kumar, Ritu Verma (Article) The present study in an attempt to find out the gender disparity in literacy at district level.

3. An Econometric analysis of inter district variation in women's labour force participation in Rajasthan (Project) by Manak Sing ariya, Dr. K.S. Shekhawat.

Understand the level and nature of female labour activity at the district level in Rajasthan.

4. Sex selective abortions and son preference attitude are also identified as determinants of declining sex ratio in certain studies related to Asian countries (D Souza & Chen 1980; Park & Cho 1995; Kynch & Sen 1983 and Das & Gupta 1987.



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5. Jadhav, Santosh, Ratnaprabha (2014) found that there were wide disparities in literacy rate and sex ratio of pune district.
6. Singh, Sandeep el.al (2013) revealed that after Independence, Literacy rate of India is increased but there are wide disparities between male and female literacy rate and sex ratio is decreased from 1901 to 2011. Corelation between male literacy and sex ratio, female literacy rate and sex ratio found in negative correlation.

Hypothesis

1. There is no signifcant relationship between education and factors of sex ratio.
2. There is no significant relationship between occupation and factors of sex ratio.
3. There is no significant relationship between caste variable and factors of sex ratio.
4. There is no significant relationship between income variable and factors of sex ratio.

Research Methodology

Social scientists and researchers use some scientific techniques to collect data for their study. The present research comprises of secondary data sources it utillizes both collection tools. The secondary data collection included various relevant literature related to the present research problem. These included various journals, articles from various libraries, websites from internets and other direct or indirect soure.

Position of women in Indian Society

The position of women in Indian Society remains a confused and pathetic one. On one hand she is glorified as Shakti and on the other she is looked down upon as a creature born to serve men. As a victim of male domination she does not know where she fits in. Different communities and caste groups, and different religious sects have varying attitudes towards women depending on their traditional cultures. In Hinduism, different caste groups treat women differently and most of them treat women as secondary partners in the social framework.

In such context, a woman faces so many problems. Often she is treated as a commodity where she is labeled and priced. This is not a new phenomenon as this can be seen in many countries. In India though attempts are made to correct this through social reform, new problems are emerging in different magnitudes periodically. The harassment of women has been taking place in different ways as position is still subservient to that to men.

The position of women is not uniform in India. Women had freedom in the ancient society of pre-vedic and early vedic times. "Education was not denied to girls who went to Gurukuls or forest universities, studying side by side with boys in co-educational institutions. It was a father's bounden duty to educate his daughters as well as his sons.

During vedic period, women and men were treated equally. The Aryan women had complete control over the household and hers was a predominant influence on the children. She even enjoyed the privilege of swayamvara, or choosing the life partner from many suitors.

On arrival at her new home, the bride was welcomed with wishes of wealth and progeny, soliciting her watchful care of the house. Thus one can see that woman, Whether she was daughter, wife or mother, had absolute supremacy during the time of Vedas.

The women in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata played crucial roles in the politics and economy but they were not given a supreme position any time. Sita, Draupadi, Gandhari and Kunti prove women's secondary role.

In the Hindu literature, women's position seems to be fluctuating. In the early Sanskrit literature women are depicted as showing their valour and administrative capacity Megasthanese, in his famous book Indica, wrote of the women- some sat of chariots, some on horses and some even on elephants and they were equipped with weapons of every kind as if they were going on campaigns.

The basic role of woman according to the laws of Manu is reflected "by a young girl, by a young woman or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subjeti to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons, a woman must never be independent".

These ideas on women are not peculiar to Sanskrit literature but can also be seen in the venacular writings. They appear and reappear very often emphasizing that the laws of Manu have become customs of socity. These customs were later changed into values. Women's position in society was more or less fixed.

During this period India saw two great movements, namely, social reform movement and independence movement, which affected the status of individual and the groups. Both these movements questioned the status of women.

Population scenario of India and Rajasthan

In Punjab among the upper cast Jat Sikh communy just 500 girls were found for every 1000 boys in rural areas. In urban areas of Puinab among Brahmins the ratio is a shocking 300. In Himachal Pradesh and Punjab researchers recorded a growing preference for having just one child. "Squeeze on family size is fuelling the trend of disappearing daughters, For households expressing preference for one child only, they want to make sure this is a son" says Action Aid researcher, Jyoti Sapru.

Districts surveyed in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh show a dip in sex ratio a familles move from first to scond or third child. The biggest drop recorded is in Morena district with 844 girls for every 1000 boys amongst first born, but just 715 by the third child.

"Mortality ratio for girls increases dramatically according to birth order. There are more girls among the second and third born as families pursue their preference for boys through abortion of neglect of their sisters", says Sapru. In an extract from the study, on asking a respondent from Dholpur in Rajasthan about the relatively big gap between the two sons. He told that his daughter died due to illness. His wife retorted "the truth of the matter is that he 'ate' her, I told him several times to take her for treatment

but he remained careless, because of which she died. The study also points to a correlation between sliding sex ratio and a shift from agriculture to non agricultural work. As land holdings and agricultural incomes diminish, districts are showing a lower sex ratio. Rural Kangra (H.P.) and Morena (M.P) reflect this trend very clearly.

"While women contribute to agriculture, non-agricultural earnings are seen largely as a male preserve. As the search for work increasingly involves migrating far from home, girls become 'unwanted' in the family" says Rajni Palriwala of Delhi School of Economics (Dept of Sociology), part of research advisory board. Kumari (2002) has observed that female participation declines as the size of land holding increases. Sinha (2004) has pointed out that female participation in labour force declines with the age at marriage.

Modern technologies of sex selection such as ultrasound combine with traditional 'technologies' of mantras, herbal potions and astrology, to offer more options for those who desire male progeny. "Even in poorer rural areas, families are willing to spend a significant chunk of their income on travelling to sex test centres in towns to detect the gender of the foetus", said Mary John of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, at a release of the initial findings of the study in New Delhi.

Ghatak, who leads Action Aid's work on women's rights, stresses the significance of this study. To reverse the decline in sex ratio we have to understand the reasons behind decisions to abort or neglect baby girls : How economic and social factors such as property rights, marriage dowries, and gender roles are combining to condemn girls even before they are born? And how government and civil society can work together to turn tragic trends around?

Census of India: 2011

Sex ratio is an important component of any census. According to the Census 2011, most of the states in Southern States have sex ratios higher than all India. On the other hand, the Northern Indian States have lower sex ratios prominent among them where sex ratio is lower particularly the juvenile sex ratio are Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. Salient features of Sex ratio across the States are as given below.

State with the highest female sex ratio- Kerala (1084)

State with the lowest female sex ratio – Haryana (861)

Rajasthan – 921; Gujarat – 920; Punjab – 876

Sex Ratios (females per 1000 males) of population, for all age groups and for 0-6 yrs age for India and some select states where the sex ratio is lower than the all India ratio, are as follows :

Table 1 : Sex Ratio in India 1991 – 2011

Census Year/ State	1991		2001		2011	
	All ages	0-6 yrs	All ages	0-6 yrs	All ages	0-6 yrs
All India	927	945	933	927	943	914
Himachal Pradesh	976	951	970	897	972	906
Haryana	865	879	861	820	879	830
Punjab	882	875	874	793	893	846
Rajasthan	910	916	922	909	928	883
Gujarat	934	928	921	898	919	886
Maharashtra	934	945	922	917	929	883

It is matter of concern that the number of states/union territories recording sex ratio higher than the national average of population has come down from 1991 Census to 2011 census, in spite of an improvement in sex ratio. The sex composition in a society has direct bearing on the social and economic conditions of a country. Both the sexes have equal importance in the society; the uneven distribution of any one of the sexes an disturb the basic equilibrium with the society.

Principle causes of decline in sex ratio

Traditional Factors

- Social pressure stronger than law.
- Girls considered as a useless economic burden.
- Misunderstanding of the importance of committed crime.
- Non Respect of women's rights.
- Exclusion of women from their societies, if traditions are not followed.
- Superstitions and religious beliefs.

Literacy

- Ignorance of the human body and the way it functions.

Cultural Factors

India has an age old fascination with the boy child. The culture in India is profoundly patriarchal and is a feudal society where women are neither seen nor heard. There is societal pressure for women to have male children and as a result women are often considered failures and tend to feel guilty after giving birth to a girl. Women who are considered to have less value because they did not give their husbands a son are at risk of being beaten and rejected by their husbands. Giving birth to a girl can lead to rejection by in-laws and by the community as a whole. In the Hindu religion, the son is responsible for lighting his parents' pyre, in order for them to reach Nirvana, and having only girls in the family amounts to being condemned to a lower caste in the next world. In Punjab, where the literacy rate is close to 70%, there are places of worship called "Son temples" exclusively for people who have male child. The superstitions are various and some are very detrimental to girls. For examples, 'Blessings and curses of Eunuchs, who travel from village to village to curse mothers who have girls while blessing those with baby boys. Another superstition is that if the first child is a girl and that girl is killed, the next child will be a boy.

Historical Chinese marriage customs: "Ever since ancient times, there has been a saying that the three most delightful moments in one's life come with success in the imperial examination, a marriage and birth of a son." In Confucianism, sons (and particularly the eldest) are responsible for the ancestors' cult. One child Policy in China- There are 80 million one-child families and the son preference is particularly prevalent in rural areas, which has led to forced abortions and sterilization. China remains unwilling to give up this policy despite the recognition that it encourages the trend to abort female fetuses.

Social and Economic Factors

Among the factors which lead to consideration of females as less valuable, the following are of special importance:

Inheritance

In many regions of rural India there is a strict social taboo on a daughter inhering land, since if she does so the land is lost by her father's lineage. If a woman attempted to exercise her legal claim to her parent's immovable property, she would be likely to lose the affection of her brothers together with their sense of obligation to support her in a family emergency or in the event she is widowed without sons. The recent Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 which deleted the gender discriminatory clause on agricultural land only benefits Hindu women leaving intact the obstacle faced by non-Hindu women.

1. Having a boy allows the father to achieve better status in society, whereas having a baby girl is seen as a curse.
2. Not only has the girl child been traditionally considered inferior to boys (she only does domestic chores) but also as a liability.
3. A bride's dowry can financially cripple a poor family. Moreover the dowry practice can deteriorate into a method of extortion of wealth from bride's to the groom's parents, leaving many daughters' parents in debt.
4. There is evidence that although the dowry was banned in India in 1961, and the caste tradition has been abolished, all these customs are deeply rooted in society and still prevail. In some areas of Asia, humiliation and even death are often the punishments for a mother who gives birth to a girl, because of the economic hardship and social stigma caused by a female child.

Consequences of declining sex ratio

Status of Women

Over the next 20 years in parts of China and India there will be a 12 to 15% excess of young men leading to an obvious bride shortage between 2015 and 2030 there will be 25 million men in China who have no hope of finding a wife. This can give rise to - A substantial increase in aggressions and organised crime

1. Rape and other forms of violence against women
2. Drug and alcohol abuse
3. Situation where all men of the family share the same wife
4. Women being viewed as commodities: for example kidnapping and trafficking of girls across borders

5. Inter community trafficking leading to purchase of women from outside (Paros).

UNICEF has warned that the alarming decline in the child sex ratio is likely to result in more girls being married at a younger age, more girls dropping out of education, increased mortality as a result of early child bearing and associated increase in acts of violence against women.

Implications for Women and Men

Going beyond marriage itself, the reduced number of women would mean those women's family roles - as wife, daughter-in-law or mother-would become increasingly in demand. These traditional family roles would, therefore, be enhanced at the expense of other life courses, such as decisions regarding celibacy, or opting for a career. As mentioned earlier, pressure towards early marriage may be detrimental to women's education, training and employment; their permanent or temporary withdrawal from the workforce may be encouraged,

In order to give them adequate time to act as (traditional) wives or mothers. As such, we may foresee a decrease in women's participation rates outside of the home, which may seem difficult when such figures for Indian women are already very low by international standards. At the same time, this would raise the demand for male labour, especially in the low-skilled and low-wage sectors that are currently largely occupied by women.

The impact for men of delayed marriage would probably be favourable to longer educational and training periods, resulting in better human capital and skills. But the consequence on participation rates is less clear. A family life that is bound to start later is likely to require higher income levels and savings, particularly if the competition for brides is severe. But at the same time, we can also envisage unemployment, enhanced job mobility and lower rates of participation and savings among some men who are excluded from or opting out of the marriage system. In fact, the entire Indian family structure would undergo significant changes. Many unmarried men would have to be accommodated within the family structure, but with a reduced share of domestic power due to their marital status. Some may also live on their own, an unusual arrangement for most Asian countries. Late marriage also means a more fragile status for men. Even while marrying older men, women may have a stronger role in the new family settings, as enhanced possibilities for divorce and remarriage may strengthen their position vis-a-vis their in-laws. In such a context, it is difficult to forecast whether the patrilineal system could survive in its current form. Parents of girls, even in smaller numbers, could benefit from a reversed flow of the dowry system, to encourage new living arrangements and more flexible or symmetrical family solidarity.

Women would probably not enhance their position in society, due to the increased risk of gender-based violence, the rising demand for sex work and the development of trafficking networks. Lower demographic weight in democratic systems would also translate into a weaker political voice in public decision-making, a trend that could be

reinforced by women's lower involvement in nondomestic activities such as employment and civil life. At the same, men would strengthen their control on public and political institutions, and may be able to bend legislation relevant to women in order to accommodate their own needs.

Poor health status of women and children

Principle consequences of decline in sex ratio for women are high risk of death; high risk of disease/ malformation and mental traumatism.

Social evils

Decline in sex ratio brings about demographic imbalance in the society (increase in number of bachelors in villages and lack of young women of marriageable age), leading to violence, rape, alcoholism, theft, depression and drug abuse.

Government Interventions and Policy Implications

Government initiative for development of women and children

For Women:

1. Working women's hostels
2. One stop centre scheme
3. Mahila E- haat
4. Swadhar greh
5. Beti Bachao, Beti padhao
6. Nari Shakti Puruskars
7. STEP

For Children

1. National Policy on children (1974), for ensuring physical, mental and social development.
2. Two action plans adopted in 1992, one for children and other specially for girl child.
3. Grant of scholarship for education of single girl child. (2006)
4. Various health programmes like vaccination, midday meal, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan etc.
5. Act for prevention of Child marriages -Sharda Act.

Efforts expected from the NGOs

The NGOs should ensure that.

1. National Government implements international treaties, keeping in view the national perspective.
2. Local Governments are aware of women's and girl's rights.
3. Co-operation and information sharing within the NGO community are facilitated. - Drawing the attention of professional bodies (doctors, lawyers, social workers) to women and girl rights and make them aware of equal rights between men and women.
4. Urge heads of different religious communities in the world to contribute towards making traditions evolve according to the Beijing platform for action.
5. Support villages (Community) education committees, with the help of specially trained educators in girl's rights.
6. Promote programs including 'gender equality' for teachers training children and adults.
7. Educate men/women, boys/girls to have a better understanding of the specific needs or situations of women & girls (health, nutrition, security, and empowerment)

8. Reinforce girl's educational skills to empower them to become more self reliant and thus less vulnerable to conditions which can lead to death
9. Better support for mother through the establishment of feeding programmes so girls can flourish.

Major suggestions and recommendations

1. There is a need to sensitize the health workers regarding the issue of declining sex ratio.
2. Review and implementation of laws concerning sanctions against female infanticide.
3. Special incentive in the case of a female birth.
4. Special assistance to female children students from one family

Conclusion

To conclude it is clear that declining sex-ratio is a serious issue coming in the way of social, economical, political as well as overall development of the country. It is a concern & moral responsibility of every one of us to make sincere effort towards its solution.

Creating awareness in the country about the act of PCPNDT and change in the mentality of the people by religious leaders and privileges to parents girl child. The falling sex ratio in our states is a cause of concern for the policy makers. Indian government is running the "Beti Bachao, Beti padhao" plan in all the districts in our nation. We are hopeful that very soon the positive results of this plan will be in front of every one in India.

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