

Child Sex Ratio in India: Issues and Challenges



Geography

KEYWORDS : Census, child sex ratio (CSR), rural, urban, empowerment, sex ratio at birth (SRB), patriarchy

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ABSTRACT

According to 2011 census, though India registered 940 female per 1000 male as compare to 933 in 2001 which was 7 point gain against the last decade, but in terms of sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years is concerned, India recorded only 914 girl child per 1000 male child, which was perhaps the lowest child sex ratio (CSR) ever recorded since independence. Today, India rank 3rd largest and 2nd fastest growing economy in the world but the attitude toward females still remains atrocities and reveals underlying deep discrimination and low status of the female in our so called modern society. It also reflects the widespread imbalance in proportion of male-female on various socio-cultural indices and such inequality possesses a momentous threat to the socio-economic structure of developing countries like India. This paper attempts to study the disparity that exist in terms of child sex ratio (CSR) with reference to overall sex ratio and try to understand the reasons behind such gender discriminative trend that has been prevailing in India over centuries.

INTRODUCTION

With 1210.60 million populations in 2011, India stood the second most populated country in the world. It accounts 17.5% of world's population with only 2.4% of land area of the world, which means the pressure on available resource is significantly high. Though, India has been continuously experience population but the growth is clearly gender selective both spatially and socio-culturally across the country. As such when we find such sex selective choice with strong desire for male irrespective of caste, creed, religions etc, it raises several questions about India's socio-cultural and economic policy striving for gender equality in the society, which in turn persuade us to pre assume that India is a country of male dominance. If it is so, then what about the concept of modern vibrant India with woman empowerment? Today we talk about giving woman an exorbitant and crucial role in the development of the country. We try to create a system where both man and woman can share an equal responsibility, but 2011 census sex ratio once again uncovered such hollow commitment and promises. And most importantly the declining sex ratio among the children between the age group of 0-6 is the serious and alarming situations, which immediately demands a comprehensive, time bound investigation and take appropriate steps to address the issues with effective and appropriate policies.

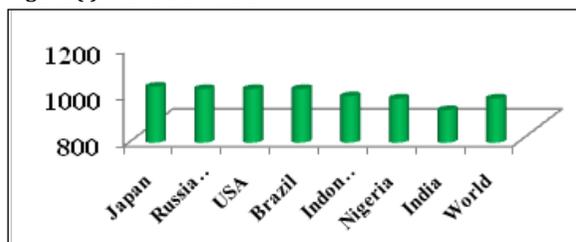
OBJECTIVES

The main objective to write this paper is to study the extent of prevailing child sex ratio (CSR) imbalance in the country and make an in depth inquest to analyze the factors that are responsible for existing trend of declining child sex ratio. Attempt has also been made to focus on what has made India so circumspect and paralyzed with respect to its policies toward such a very important social indicators and illustrate the substantial future consequences of declining CSR.

TREND OF CHILD SEX RATIO (CSR) IN INDIA

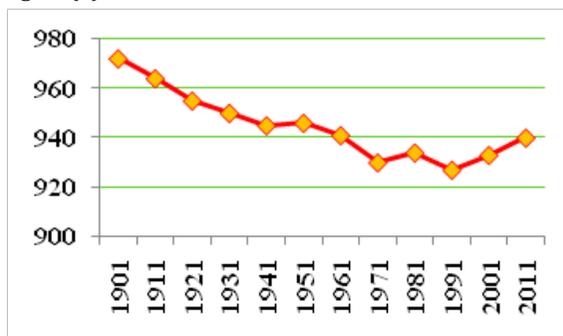
In order to understand the child sex ratio (CSR), first of all one has to make a close observation of overall sex ratio trend enumerated over the century [see table no. 1 and 2]. Sex ratio or male-female balance has always been in favour of male groups in India. Nevertheless it reflects the male dominance imprint on the historically socio-cultural and economic paradigms.

Figure (i) World Sex Ratio



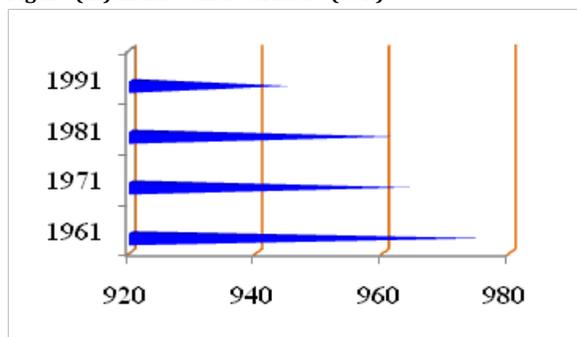
In 2011, India had only 940 female with respect to 1000 male which was quite low in compare to other countries of the world [see table no. (1) and fig no. (i)]. Even the least developed country like Nigeria, Nepal, Cambodia etc are much ahead and highlights India's ignorant attitude and low status for the woman in society. If we refer to historical accounts, it can be found that male group has always occupied high position in the administrative, political and socio-cultural sphere. India being the country of diverse culture, different social groups has unveiled heterogeneous male-female population.

Figure (ii) Decadal Sex Ratio of India



[The table no. (2) and fig no. (ii)] shows how India has been the home of male population. If one will go through the table, it can be seen that desire and demand for male population has increased in subsequent decades but on the other hand female choice has gone considerably down. Only in the last two decades, India has managed to make some progress. But the exact reason is somewhat debatable. When we go through the sex ratio at death, it is interesting to note that the death of male with respect to female is remarkably high. The life expectancy figure recorded in 2001 and 2011 is also in favour of female. Thus, one concludes that in the last decade more female survived than male thus increasing the overall sex ratio in the country. On the other hand, the picture presented by child sex ratio is contrasting. In 2011, census of India reported that India exhibited lowest sex ratio in an age group of 0-6 years since independence. It was only 914 girl child in compare to 1000 male child, thus taking forward the legacy of trend of subsequent decrease of sex ratio in coming decades. Since Independence [see table no. 3 and fig no. (iii)] child sex ratio (CSR) has decreased showing male child as a first preference for Indian couples. Despite India's so called family planning programmes and enactment of various Act, India has failed to arrest the declining trend of sex ratio among the children. To understand the worrisome of the situation in the country one must focus on the child sex ratio enumerated on various socio-cultural indicators and state wise.

Figure (iii) India's Chid Sex Ratio (CSR)



The child sex ratio (CSR) compiled on the basis of some of the major states in India [see table no. (4)] highlight interesting facts. Barring few states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat etc almost every state have declining girl child sex ratio, though in some states situation is quite minimal. But, most surprisingly, Punjab has shown remarkable progress followed by Haryana in the whole country. On regional context, south and north east India is in much better position than the northern counterpart.

In the index of urbanization, once again you can notice (see table no. 5) the declining trend of child sex ratio in both rural and urban areas. But when we go into detail study of 2011 census data, rural urban child sex ratio resembles quite interesting pictures. In 26 states/UTs child sex ratio was higher in rural areas in compare to urban fraternity. Only Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Manipur along with Delhi, Chandigarh and Punduchery registered higher sex ratio in urban areas. Though rural areas reflected higher sex ratio but the trend in rural as was not very encouraging one. In 25 states/UTs the child sex ratio has declined in compare to 2001. On other hand, trend is slightly better in urban region wherein 25 states/UTs child sex ratio has decline. In terms of sex ratio at birth (SRB), in 2011 most of the state showed lower SRB. As per Annual Health Survey (AHS) conducted across 9 states, SRB is significantly lower in rural areas than urban areas. Highest SRB was recorded by Chhattisgarh while lowest by Uttarkhand. [Table no. (6)] shows sex ratio at birth (SRB) experienced by major states at different frequency range. Highest SRB (112) is recorded at the sex ratio range of 901-950 followed by 851 - 900 (92). SRB of more than 1000 is lowest (6). Some states like Uttarkand, Rajasthan; Uttar Pradesh etc even registered lowest SRB in the range of 751-800. Thus, one can easily imagine the poor status and negligence of girl child in Indian society.

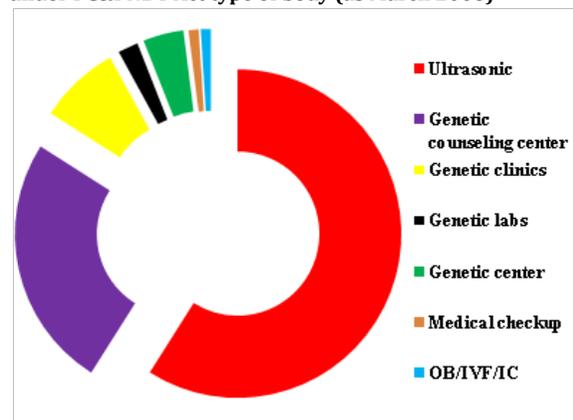
But in term of scheduled tribe and scheduled tribe group is concerned, in 2011 both the group present higher child sex ratio and overall sex ratio than the national average. Child sex ratio of ST was 957 while SC stands at 933. Research says that better sex ratio among tribal group can be attribute to none existent of social bias among gender in tribal cultures and lack of access to new advanced pre natal determination technology as majority of tribal people are poor in India. While in case of SC population, it reflects mix pictures and corresponds with regional distribution. In north India, they shows lower CSR while in southern India, their situation is far better. But as whole they have been able to maintain higher CSR in compare to other castes. Religion wise, in 2001, Christians with 964 child sex ratio was at the first place followed by Buddhists (942). Hindu (931) was behind Muslim (936). But the lowest child sex ratio was registered by Sikh followed by Jains.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The above discussion with the help of various available statistical data and cartograms clearly portray the malicious attitude of our society with reference to female members. Since time immemorial, Indian tradition and culture has given higher status and position to male member irrespective of caste, religion, creed etc on socio-cultural ground or economically and politically when it comes in terms of administrative authority. Indian history is full of accounts that speak about the pivotal role

played by the man. Hence, such a low sex ratio is not a new trend for the country like India. But when we go through the social indexes of developed countries and try to study and analyze their all round development in every field whether social or economical, it compels us to think about the role of female in their society. How male-female ratios represent a delicate socio-economic link for the overall development of the countries? It also attracts our attention that given the opportunity, female has contributed significantly in building the road map for healthy growth of the nation and can take the nation toward the path of success and self sufficiency. If so then what has made India to perform such a poor manifestation in terms of child sex ratio (CSR) in subsequent decades? (1) One of the main reasons can be attributed for strong desire to have male child. In Indian society, male child is given more priority by their parents as compare to girl child. Male children are always encouraged and supported for higher studies, to venture career in diverse fields and even migrate long distance. Such prejudice between male and female can be observed irrespective of all caste, religion, creed, region etc in India. So what makes Indian parents to give such a high privilege to male child than female? The answer can be found within our underlying customs and tradition. In Indian society female or daughter usually leave their parental house after their marriage and shift to spouse house. While male member or son stay and take part in economically active activities and look after their parents at their old stage. It has also been studied that female do not contributed toward the income of the family. They are mostly engaged in economically inactive activities like household work. Thus, males are credited as an asset to the family while female a burden. This might compel the Indian parents to think that female child is by birth a burden and takes very less initiative to give better facilities like son. (2) In India, majority of people lives in villages. As per 2011 census, still 68.8% of Indian populations are rural in nature and lives in a poor condition deceived by traditional orthodox beliefs and customs and one of them is the practice of system of dowry, where in female child means more expenditure and expensive for their lifestyle. The study has revealed that daughter in most of the part of India means "double loss" (IDRC) as she not only leaves their parental house during the time of marriage but also incur huge expenses in the form of dowry. On the other hand, son provides a customary source of income making the first choice of the couple. Even urban areas are not exempted from the denunciation of dowry system.

Figure (iv) Percentage distribution of bodies registered under PC&PNDT Act type of body (as March 2006)



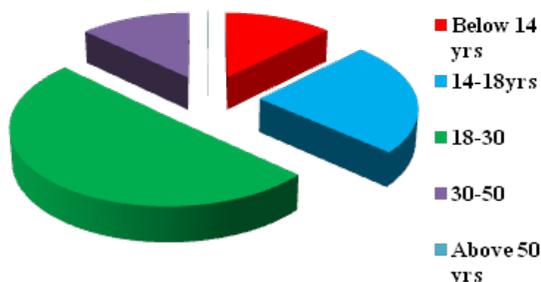
(3) The innovation of advanced and sophisticated medical technology has also played its own role. Most of the small and large urban town provides cheaper illegal prenatal abortion practices in India. Though various social campaigns like "Atmaja" and laws have been enacted through PC & PNDT Act, 1994 (Pre Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostics Technique Act) etc, still such practice occurs in large scale in Indian suburb areas [see fig no. (iv)]. Such factor can be one of the main reasons for low urban child sex ratio in 2011. But the pattern of male selective urban migration which is common in Indian cities cannot be ignored while computing the overall low sex ratio in urban centers. But

one cannot deny the role played by advanced and easily available techno-medical accessories. On the other hand, rural areas are more affected by its practice. Due to better communication system, now a days rural area can easily be reached by urban now how. Large number of people from rural areas comes to nearby urban areas for such illegal practice. Therefore, the impact of modern technological assistant can widely be seen in terms of declining child sex ratio in most of the rural part of India. As per the Annual Health survey conducted among some major states, in all most all states, lower SRB has led to lower CSR [see table no. (7)]. (4) Various researches indicate that biologically, girl child are much stronger and have the greater chance of survival than male child. It has also being revealed that females who are often called as a weaker gender in our society are in fact biologically much stronger because of having two X chromosomes. It means, infant mortality rate must be higher in male child rather than among girl child and subsequently more female than male. But in reality, the situation is reversed. In India most of girl child are not even able to complete a year after their birth due negligence thus resulting into high girl infant mortality rate. (5) Another very serious issue is childhood death of girl child. Large number of girl child between one month to one year age group die every year from gastrointestinal disease, pneumonia and other miscellaneous causes in India. The study in different parts of India shows that girl child being considered as worthlessness; they are often not given any medical priorities. In many, cases due to negligence of mother, still births, has also affected the lesser girl child. (6) In almost all the countries of the world a family is considered complete on the attainment of a son (Clarke, 1960). Similar, psychological and masculine theory exists in India. Family planning becomes effective only with the birth of male child. Such concept has also considerably contributed toward the decline of child sex ratio CSR.

CONSEQUENCES

In India, the situation of child sex ratio (CSR) is very worrisome and bleak. The prevailing disparities that exist in child sex ratio have a far reaching impact not only in our demographic structure but also in the socio-cultural and economic composition of the country in coming decades. So, the question is what kind of consequences it will bring in coming future? Whether it benefits the nation or causes severe damage to very basic structure of our society? The questions are complex, complicated and brain storming and possess a serious challenge to the social scientist. As we have already discussed the various trends, issues and challenges associated with child sex ratio, let us now discuss some of its future consequences.

Figure (v) Rape incidents (2012) in India



(1) One of adverse impact of low child sex ratio can be seen in terms of increasing incident of crime especially rape, female trafficking, kidnapping, abduction etc against the female. As per the data released by National Crime record bureau, 6.8% of crime against woman was increased from 2011 compare to 2012 and 24.7% since 2008. 95.2% of total crime of IPC component was reported and it has increased from 8.9% in 2008 to 10.20% in the year 2013. [see table no. (8) and fig no. (v)]. The lower sex ratio in the country has in fact speeded incident of rape many fold irrespective of caste, creed, religion, regions

etc thus making the situation from bad to worse. (2) Another serious impacts of CSR will be the paucity of bride for marriage. The study reveals that near about 20% or more male in some of the states of India have to remain unmarried. It has also found that the age of marriage for both girl and boy will gradually increase due to the difficulty of getting suitable spouse, as marriage in India is based on dowry, earning capacity, education etc. (3) It has also been prophesied that female may enjoy greater freedom in the selection of spouse and eventually strengthen their position in the society and take part in the key areas of and decision making process of the country. (4) Study also indicates that incidence of divorce; widow remarriage and divorce remarriage will become common thus changing the basic matrimonial system of the country. Inter-religion, inter-caste and inter-region marriage may also become predominate phenomena in coming years, though such matrimonial features has already led its imprint in our society.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the above discussion shows that child sex ratio (CSR) in India is a very complex phenomena. Its origin is not only based within our socio-cultural values but also toward our patriarchy system. To understand its prevalence, both present socio-economic set up and the historical pattern has to be taken into consideration. Today, declining child sex ratio (CSR) is a matter of great concern for the government and challenging subject matter for the social scientists. To overcome from such lethal and catastrophic social perception, both government and people have to work together assisted by modern research and inquisition to make people aware about the value of girl child and their potentiality. Female and male are the two pillars of the society and one is incomplete without the other. Together, they can make this world habitual and lead the civilization to a new dimension and era.

Table no. (4) Child sex ratio (CSR) in major states in India

States	CSR 2001	CSR 2011	Change in CSR (0-6yrs) 2001 -11
Uttar Pradesh	916	899	-17
Bihar	942	933	-9
Assam	965	957	-8
West Bengal	960	950	-10
Jharkhand	965	943	-22
Orissa	953	934	-19
Chhattisgarh	975	964	-9
Madhya Pradesh	932	912	-20
Gujarat	883	886	+3
Maharashtra	913	883	-30
Andhra Pradesh	961	943	-18
Karnataka	946	943	-3
Kerala	960	959	-1
Tamil Nadu	942	946	+4
Punjab	798	846	+48
Haryana	819	830	+11
Delhi	868	866	-2
Rajasthan	909	883	-26
Chandigarh	845	867	+22
Nagaland	964	944	-20

Source: Census of India

Table no. (6) Child sex ratio at birth (SRB)

States	Frequency Range					
	751-800	801-850	851-900	901-950	951-1000	1001-1050
Uttarkhand	1	2	9	1		
Rajasthan	1	8	14	8	1	
Uttar Pradesh	2	11	22	22	11	2
Bihar			11	17	9	
Assam		1	5	14	3	
Jharkhand			5	9	4	
Orissa		2	10	17	1	
Chhattisgarh			1	7	5	3
Madhya Pradesh		5	15	17	7	1
Total	4	29	92	112	41	6

Source: Census of India

Table no. (7) Co-relation between Child Sex ratio and Sex ratio at Birth

States	CSR (0-6 yrs) 2011	SRB (AHS) 2011
Uttarkhand	886	866
Rajasthan	883	878
Uttar Pradesh	899	904
Bihar	933	919
Assam	957	925
Jharkhand	943	923
Orissa	934	905
Chhattisgarh	964	951
Madhya Pradesh	912	904

Source: Annual Health Survey, 2011

Table no. (8) Crime head-wise incidents of crime against women during 2008 - 2012 and percentage variation in 2012 over 2011

Sl.	Crime head	Year					Percentage variation in 2012 over 2011
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
1.	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2.	Kidnapping & abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3.	Dowry death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC)	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4.	Cruelty by husband and relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	106,527	7.5

5.	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)	40,413	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6.	Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 509 IPC)	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7.	Importation of girl from foreign country (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
A	Total IPC crime against Women	186,616	194,835	205,009	219,142	232,528	6.1
8.	Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987	1	0	0	1	0	-100.0
9.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3
10.	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	1,025	845	895	453	141	-68.9
11.	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	5,555	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	36.5
B	Total SLL crime against Women	9,240	8,969	8,576	9,508	11,742	23.5
	Total(A+B)	195,856	203,804	213,585	228,650	244,270	6.8

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

Table no. (1) Sex ratio of countries at a Glance

Sl.	Countries	Sex ratio (male for 100 females)	Sl.	Countries	Sex ratio (male for 100 females)
1.	Russian federation	86.0	22.	Na-mibia	98.9
2.	Japan	94.9	23.	Ethio-pia	99.1
3.	France	94.9	24.	Indone-sia	99.4
4.	Cambodia	96.0	25.	South Korea	99.4
5.	Italy	96.1	26.	Aus-tralia	99.5
6.	Germany	96.3	27.	Sweden	99.5
7.	Thailand	96.5	28.	Cam-eron	99.7
8.	Burundi	96.6	29.	Kenya	99.8
9.	New Zea-land	96.7	30.	Uganda	100.1
10.	Brazil	96.8	31.	Congo	100.2
11.	Myanmar	97.1	32.	Philip-pines	100.5
12.	U.K	97.2	33.	Ghana	100.6

13.	Mexico	97.3	34.	Zambia	100.6
14.	Sri Lanka	97.3	35.	Egypt	100.8
15.	Mongolia	97.5	36.	Maldives	101.4
16.	USA	97.6	37.	Bangladesh	102.4
17.	Zimbabwe	97.6	38.	Malaysia	102.8
18.	Vietnam	97.9	39.	India	106.7
19.	South Africa	98.3	40.	Afghanistan	107.2
20.	Nepal	98.4	41.	China	108
21.	Canada	98.6	42.	Bhutan	112.7

Source: World Statistics Pocket book, 2011

Table no. (2) Decadal trend of sex ratio in India

Years	Sex ratio
Year	Sex ratio
1901	972
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	927
2001	933
2011	940

Source: Census of India

Table no. (3) Child sex ratio (0-6yrs)

Years	CSR
1961	976
1971	964
1981	962
1991	945
2001	927
2011	914

Source: Census of India

Table no. (5) Rural Urban CSR in India

Years	Rural	Urban
1991	948	935
2001	933	906
2011	919	902

Source: Census of India

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