

Trends in Child Sex Ratio in the State of Andhra Pradesh and Social Implications of Gender Ratio Imbalances

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Abstract— The structure of population which consists of age and sex of any demographic group mainly affect economic, political and social aspects at present as well as the future. Equal participation of both men and women is crucial in shaping the family as well as the society. Andhra Pradesh state which registered low Population growth rate, has been experiencing a peculiar situation with regard to gender ratio. There is a need to address the causes and consequences of such paradoxical issue.

Index Terms: Child Sex Ratio, Structure of Population, Paradoxical gender ratio.

INTRODUCTION

The size of population and the composition of population play an important role in the development of the nation. The structure of population mainly consists of age and sex which are basic characteristics of any demographic group. Age and sex are visible indisputable and convenient indicators of social status, for they influence manpower planning in all aspects. Equal participation of both male and female is crucial in shaping the family as well as the society.

The overall sex ratio of India as per 2011 census is 940 women per 1000 men. According to the latest NFHS-5 (2019-20) survey, there are 1020 women per 1000 men. There is a tremendous improvement in the sex ratio and is more skewed in favour of women. Though the data is not accurate as the Census survey data, it is at par with the developed countries. However, the sex ratio at birth for children born in last five years is 929. i.e. 929 girls per 1000 boys. There are many variations between states with regard to child sex ratio as well as rural urban divide with in each state. The paradoxical shift in gender ratio cannot be analysed until the age wise final data available. However, the low child sex ratio is an

alarming indicator which needs utmost attention to save the girl child.

According to National Family Health Survey -5 (2019-20), Andhra Pradesh registered low Population growth rate, with low Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 1.8. It has been experiencing a peculiar situation with regard to gender ratio. The overall sex ratio in Andhra Pradesh is 1045 females per 1000 males which is higher than the national average. But sex ratio at birth under five years registered 934 girls per 1000 boys. Of course there is slight improvement in the child sex ratio when compared to NFHS-4 survey of 914: 1000. But there are too many variations with regard to rural urban child sex ratio in Andhra Pradesh. The CSR in rural Andhra Pradesh is 877 and in urban areas it is 957. Moreover it is also observed that the CSR is decreasing in some districts even with the implementation of several measures to save girl child.

In this context, this paper made an attempt to study the trends in CSR as well as causes for gender ratio imbalances.

OBJECTIVE

- 1 To observe the trends in child sex ratio in India and in Andhra Pradesh with rural urban divide,
- 2 To study the variations in overall sex ratio and child sex ratio among different districts of Andhra Pradesh,
- 3 To examine the factors for such gender ratio differences
- 4 To examine the consequences of low CSR on society,
- 5 To suggest policy implication.

METHODOLOGY

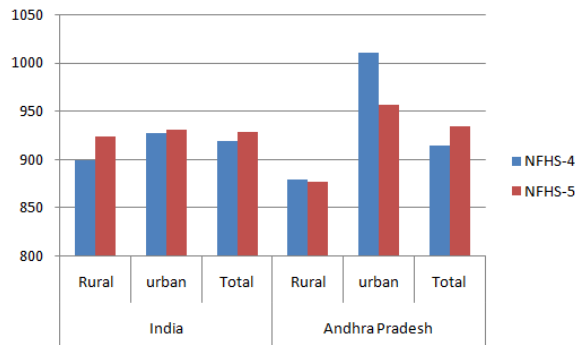
The present paper is based on the secondary data. The data is taken from the fact sheets of NFHS-5 (2019-20). It is descriptive and exploratory in nature which is based on the information from various journals, web sources and books.

CHILD SEX RATIO

The Census of 2011 attracted the attention of the entire nation towards child sex ratio by recording all-time low level for the age group of 0-6 years. The CSR in Andhra Pradesh also registered a declining trend since 1991 though it is above the national average. Sex ratio at birth for children born in the last five years.

(Females per 1000 males) is 943 i.e., 943 girls per 1000 boys for undivided Andhra Pradesh. Moreover the National Health and Family Survey-4 (2014-15) report revealed the district wise data for rural and urban areas for first time on several demographic indicators. Figure 1.0 shows trends in rural urban CSR in India as well as Andhra Pradesh.

Trends in CSR in India and Andhra Pradesh



The above figure shows that there is gradual improvement in CSR at the national level at rural and urban areas. But in Andhra Pradesh there is declining trend in the child gender ratio both at the rural and urban areas. The factors attributed to the declining trend might be understood with district wise trends.

DISTRICT WISE TRENDS IN CSR

NFHS -4 Report revealed the fact sheet district wise for rural and urban areas. But the NFHS-5 Report fact sheets contain only the district data. Table 1.0 shows the trends in the sex ratio at birth for children born in the last five years.

| S.No | District | NFHS-4(2015-16) | NFHS-5(2019-20) |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Ananthapur | 1196 | 881 |
| 2 | Chittoor | 1168 | 1019 |
| 3 | East Godavari | 1008 | 882 |
| 4 | Guntur | 637 | 941 |
| 5 | Krishna | 900 | 1139 |
| 6 | Kurnool | 816 | 918 |
| 7 | Prakasam | 799 | 837 |
| 8 | Nellore | 1156 | 1011 |
| 9 | Srikakulam | 933 | 1163 |
| 10 | Visakhapatnam | 1097 | 974 |
| 11 | Vizianagaram | 864 | 898 |
| 12 | West Godavari | 834 | 833 |
| 13 | YSR Cuddapah | 675 | 779 |
| Andhra Pradesh | | 914 | 934 |

The key findings from the above Table are as follows:

- There is an improvement in CSR in Six districts viz., Guntur, Krishna, Kurnool, Prakasam, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and YSR Cuddapah.
- Though YSR Cuddapah showed an improvement, it stood at the bottom of all the districts.
- Srikakulam district registered highest CSR among all the districts.
- There is a drastic fall in CSR is observed in Ananthapur from 1196 to 881 and East Godavari from 1008 to 882.
- Nellore and Visakhapatnam districts also registered down ward trend in CSR.
- Only four districts registered more than 1000 girls per 1000 boys.
- East Godavari not only registered a sharp decline in CSR, but overall sex ratio is also less than the state and the national average’.
- *It is observed that in four districts of Rayalaseema, the CSR is less than the State average.

FACTORS FOR LOW CSR

The New Population Policy which aimed at reduction in low fertility rate succeeded in changing the attitudes of the parents towards small family. The small family may be defined as the family with 2 children i.e. 2 boys or 1boy and 1 girl and 2 girls. They family with son preference is unable to accept 2 girls. This is because of the following reasons:

- Son preference is mainly due to the custom of performing post death rituals by sons.
- Reluctance of parents to stay with daughters in their old age as they feel it as against the tradition.
- Parents feel sons as the insurance against old age.
- Male dominating society generally prefers to spend more on sons' education to daughters.
- Insecure feeling of parents' to send their daughters to distant places either for education or for employment.
- Increasing expenditure on child education is preventing them of having girl child because the girls will be sent to in-laws house after marriage.
- Even after bearing educational expenditure on girls, parents again are forced to spend on marriage formalities of daughters in the form of dowries and post marriage formalities.
- Women have no freedom in decision making regarding the family size though they have to bear the pregnancy burden.
- In villages, surprisingly illiterate women themselves prefer sons.
- Technology gives chance to know the sex of the foetus in advance.
- Decreasing moral values and ethical values made the parents to ruin the female foetus.
- No consideration of woman's health while aborting the pregnancy with son preference.
- Lack of professional ethics in some doctors as they are cooperating families in female foeticide.
- Last but not the least, misuse of medical termination of pregnancy.

Widespread prevalence of sex selective abortions in North India has already alerted the Government to take strenuous measures. Enactment of PC & PNDT Act, Compulsory Registration of scanning centres, Punishments imposed on accused parents and doctors are some of the measures taken to control sex selective abortions. However it is proved that these measures alone cannot bring change in the attitudes of the people. Moreover the stunning fact is that, this practice is more in socially and economically advanced families. The same is proved in East Godavari, West Godavari and Krishna districts of

Andhra Pradesh. If the same trend is unchecked, less number of girls' population to boys may lead to several social disorders in near future.

- 1 Men may remain unmarried due to lack of suitable girls.
- 2 Protection of girl child might become a serious problem which prevents parents to give birth to girl child again.
- 3 Women trafficking, mass kidnap of girls is already prevalent in Rajasthan where the CSR is low. It is a warning sign to Andhra Pradesh state.
- 4 Women protection replaces women empowerment issue by causing a serious law and order problem.
- 5 Unless certain corrective measures are taken, some castes may lose their identity or disappear in the future.
- 6 Surrogate mother culture may become common which again poses threat to women health.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:

The key findings of the study are very gloomy in nature and need a thorough analysis. The socially and economically advanced districts, East and West Godavari registered very low girl child population. Nearly 43 to 46% of the girls in the age group of (15-19) are not having even 10 years of schooling in these districts. More than 1/3rd of girls got married before 18 years of age in Ananthapur, Guntur, Kurnool, Prakasam and in Vizianagaram districts. Moreover, it is also observed that more than 40% of girls in the age group of (15-19) are anaemic in East West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts. All these findings need a thorough analysis by obtaining rural, urban data from the village level.

The Government policy measures for "Beti Bachaavo, Beti Padhavo" are the need of the hour. Proper implementation of Janani Suraksha Yojana, Kalyana Lakshmi, Sukanya samruddhi Yojana are very helpful to encourage girl births. Widespread propaganda of PC & PNDT Act in regional languages, compulsory registration of scanning centres along with active tracking system to scanning machine with a centralised location may prevent misuse of technology in sex selective abortions. Treatment of female foeticide on par with murder case and speedy prosecution of such cases with fast track courts control such fearless operations.

The role of Voluntary Organisations and NGOs is very crucial in changing the mindset of the people. Now-a-days, daughters started supporting their parents and taking care of them in their old age. This should be treated as a legitimate issue. Institutional support to elderly people by running free old age homes, old age pensions, free medical camps to aid the needy elder people help to overcome son preference. Ultimately everyone should realise that the success of a family, state and the nation depends on gender balance and equal participation of both male and female population. As the children are the future citizens, this paper appeals the entire society to think humanly and let the girl child to live in the society.

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